

DRAFT 30th Oct 2006

PROPOSAL FOR THE FORMATION OF CATCHMENT STAKEHOLDER GROUPS TO ENABLE EHS WATER MANAGEMENT UNIT TO ENGAGE WITH STAKEHOLDERS AT A CATCHMENT LEVEL, AND TO SUPPORT IMPROVED IMPLEMENTATION OF WFD

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Water Framework Directive (WFD) was adopted into NI Legislation on 22 December 2003 as The Water Environment (WFD) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.
- 1.2 Article 14.1.a of the Water Framework Directive requires the competent authority (i.e. DOE/EHS) to actively encourage the participation of all interested parties in achieving all of the objectives of the Directive.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In December 2005 a Catchment Stakeholder Group (CSG) was formed by EHS in the Lower Foyle catchment area, with the aim of working closely with partners in dealing with water quality management issues. The CSG comprises representatives of all major local and regional stakeholder sectors/groups, and relevant Government agencies, brought together to support and encourage a joint approach to identifying and solving catchment scale water quality management issues.
- 2.2 This group was initially established to help address the operational needs of Water Management Unit (WMU) in tackling local water quality, and related problems in catchments. However, by recognising wider ecological objectives, the group can also support better implementation of the Water Framework Directive.
- 2.3 Public participation is a key ingredient to the success of the Group. The CSG in the Lower Foyle catchment area provides a forum for local knowledge and expertise in order to address and resolve regional water quality issues.

3. VISION & PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Feed back from stakeholders and groups with an interest in the Lower Foyle CSG area has been positive and EHS WMU now proposes to form CSGs in the other catchment areas in Northern Ireland i.e.:
Erne & Melvin;
Upper Foyle;

Bush & Glens;
Lower Lough Neagh;
Lagan & Strangford;
Upper Lough Neagh; and
Carlingford.

These area groupings represent an initial proposal. Boundaries are not rigid and fine tuning may be required to reflect local interests. Indeed, eight groups may not be enough.

The vision for these groups is to engage with stakeholders at a catchment level, and to support improved implementation of WFD

- 3.2 WMU acknowledges that there are already successful working groups dealing with environmental matters, including water quality issues in the several catchment areas. However these may not be specifically focused on the requirements for WFD compliance. We have already begun discussions with pre-existing committees to ensure effective working relationships, and are actively exploring the possibility of sub-groups of these existing committees being formed to address water quality management issues, both operational and longer term WFD implementation. New groups will be formed in other areas on a rolling basis.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

- 4.1 The Lower Foyle CSG agreed, and adopted the following TOR, and it is hoped that all CSGs will accept the similar terms, although it will be up to each group to adopt their own final version of the TOR.

- 4.2 The CSG will:

- Provide a source of help, support and advice for local/regional stakeholder engagement.
- Provide support and advice on resolving water quality and pollution prevention issues.
- Provide knowledge on the [Lower Foyle] Catchment to ensure issues of local significance are identified.

5.0 OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

- 5.1 WMU will, in the first instance, service the CSGs, including providing a Chairperson, recording and communicating all decisions. However assistance may be sought with this function from other units of the EHS and Government Agencies. The following working methods are proposed:

- The CSG will provide support and advice on appropriate decisions.
- EHS will draw upon members of the CSG outside normal meetings, as appropriate, to assist with technical and detailed work.
- Membership and the terms of reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- EHS will use its website to publish CSG meeting details and other communications.
- The CSGs will provide fora for communication between International River Basin District (IRBD) and River Basin District (RBD) groups.
- Members will be expected, if necessary, to share a role in resolving conflict.
- Local representatives will be responsible for feeding back to national colleagues.
- Members are expected to have a basic understanding of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in order to contribute. EHS has made background information available on the WFD on its website.
- The CSG will meet at least 2 times per year.

5.2 WMU plans to recruit three Catchment Officers who will play a key role in the development and work of the CSGs.

6.0 TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

6.1

DATE	PHASE	INVOLVED
Oct – Nov 2006	Agreement	Stakeholders
Jan – May 2007	Set up phase	EHS - WMU
May – July 2007	Meetings	All CSG members

6.2 In line with the implementation timetable for the WFD it is intended that all CSGs will have met at least once before mid July 2007.

7. REVIEW

7.1 The operation and effectiveness will be reviewed internally in WMU on an annual basis.