

## Minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting

### Northern Ireland Water Framework Directive Stakeholder Forum

River House, Belfast

13<sup>th</sup> MAY 2008

#### Attendance:

George Alexander	NI Water
Gordon Best	Quarry Products Association
William Caldwell	DOE (PEPG) – acting chairperson
Brian Ervine	DARD (Environmental Policy)
Joanne Gaffney	Aquaculture Initiative
Paul Gill	DRD Water Policy
Uel Irwin	AES Kilroot
Aileen Lawson	Ulster Farmers Union
Linda McGoldrick	DARD (Environmental Policy)
Philip McMurray	DOE (PEPG)
Angus McRobert	DOE (EHS)
Robbie Marshall	Fresh Water Taskforce (UAF)
Emma Neill	DOE (PEPG)
Jenny Robinson	General Consumer Council NI
Norman Simmons	DOE (PEPG)
David Wright	DCAL Fisheries
Trevor Wright	Port of Larne

#### Apologies:

Michael Bell	NI Food & Drink Association
Séan Convery	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
Andrew Frazer	British Hydropower Association
Dick James	NI Fish Producers Organisation Ltd
Fergal Kearney	NI Tourist Board
Karen McCambley	NILGA
Alex McGarel	Freshwater Taskforce (WWF)
Ian Morrow	NI Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Brian Murphy	CNCC
Gabriel Nelson	DOE (EHS)
James Robinson	RSPB
Alex Scullin	NI Agricultural Producers Association
Paul Simpson	DOE
Andrew Sloan	NI Sports Council

#### 1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> February 2008 were approved.

## **2. Matters Arising from Minutes and Updates Paper**

There were three matters arising: Joanne Gaffney (JG) confirmed that she had made some enquiries regarding data available on protected areas but that she may wish to discuss this further at the next Stakeholder Forum meeting.

It has been agreed that the IWG minutes will be posted on the EHS Website once they have been formally approved. A link to the minutes will be placed on the WFD Website and this will be circulated around Forum members once the first set of minutes is available online.

JG noted that the consultation paper for the Shellfish Waters Directive is now due out in June. Norman Simmons confirmed that this will go before the environment committee before the recess so the paper will be out for the summer.

**Action: Emma Neill (EN) to circulate link to IWG minutes once available**

## **3. Preliminary Classification & Objective setting – Presentation**

Angus McRobert (AMcR) gave a presentation to the group. He explained the RBMP process which has taken place, from characterisation and preliminary analysis of pressures, new monitoring programmes (which started beginning 2006), to determining the objectives and the proposed measures. Several tables of initial monitoring information for rivers were presented, although AMcR explained that for some areas there is limited information as some classification schemes are totally new and so the monitoring is incomplete.

AMcR acknowledged that some of the figures are disappointing. This is due to the “one out all out” system. He explained that the approach which will be taken to proposing objectives is straightforward – in general, the aim is to improve each water body by one step in the classification by 2015 – e.g. moderate to good and poor to moderate, although the objective for “bad” water bodies will be to reach “moderate” by 2015. Although the data presented was associated with rivers, AMcR conveyed that the majority of coastal and transitional waters are either “high” or “good”. There will be some refinement of data before the draft RBMPs, but he emphasised that the supporting appendices to the plans will contain lots of technical reports for those who wish to access that information. JG asked if there would be maps included with the draft plans. AMcR confirmed that some summary maps would be within the draft plans and that detailed maps would be available through the electronic 3<sup>rd</sup> Tier of the plans.

Expressions of certainty will be associated with the objectives e.g. where there is a low degree of certainty of the achievement of measures, more investigative monitoring may be necessary before those measures can be

justified and put in place. These expressions of certainty, or confidence, will be part of the draft plans and so will be open to public comment.

The importance of assessing the impact of existing measures was also emphasised. Robbie Marshall (RM) stated that he believes that existing measures are not being implemented correctly. William Caldwell (WC) conveyed that some measures will take time before the impact is demonstrated. RM stressed the importance of policing existing Directives and gave the example of the Nitrates Directive. Aileen Lawson (AL) noted that, in respect of the Nitrates Directive, DARD have issued lots of press releases, training programmes have been carried out and there are great risks for farmers who breach the regulations but unfortunately there will be a small number who disregard them. Brian Ervine (BE) agreed that there has been a lot of progress in terms of education and awareness but that this will take time to impact. David Wright (DW) asked if nutrients locked in sediments in water bodies could continue to have harmful effects. AMcR responded, saying that it is difficult to estimate, but that those water bodies may take longer to respond to any measures to reduce nutrient dispersion. JG asked if, in a situation where the chemical data is satisfactory but the biology is deficient; there would be a reliance on the chemical data. AMcR observed that this situation is common. Chemical and biological monitoring are parallel but separate programmes and the absolute association between the two is still the subject of much ongoing study. The WFD imposed the need for new biological monitoring tools. Everyone is still working to establish full management confidence in these new tools. The ongoing working assumption is that we must work to make the water chemistry at least good because the biology cannot be good if the chemistry is bad.

AMcR explained that there are several Planning Assumptions which support the draft RBMP process, and that these are contained in a paper which will be produced alongside the draft plans. Many of these include the assumed impact of existing legislation or measures. Uel Irwin (UI) asked if there has been a move against culverts in NI as in the rest of the UK. AMcR stated that one of the Planning Policy Statements refers to culverts and there is a presumption against the practice. JG enquired about an increased emphasis on coastal protection work and asked if there was an existing legislative framework. AMcR said that this was being addressed within ICZM. AMcR emphasised that the RBMP development is a rolling process and that plans can be modified as more monitoring or funding becomes available. WC asked if the planning assumptions would place a weight on any specific government departments more than others. AMcR stressed that the plans would require movement towards 100% achievement of best management practice. He gave the example of DETI's clean, green energy policies and the desire to ensure that they do not have any potential negative effects on the water environment. The draft plan will be examined through the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process to ensure compatibility and full integration with the plans of other agencies and departments.

BE asked if a water body would be given a lower classification simply because it is heavily modified, even if the chemical and biological data is

good. AMcR explained that the chemical data may be good for a HMWB, but it is unlikely that the biological data would be satisfactory, and this is the purpose of the HMWB definition – it is necessary that these water bodies achieve as high a biological status as is possible. He also conveyed that the draft plans propose approximately 40 bodies to be identified as heavily modified, although stakeholders will be able to have input on these proposals in the public consultation period.

UI enquired about monitoring points in rivers. AMcR explained that the number of monitoring points is related to the identification of water bodies which are representative sub-catchments calculated from the area which generates a minimum flow. There are over 600 river monitoring sites in NI which are used to report the status for 550 river water bodies.

#### **4. Participation – feedback from subgroup meeting 1<sup>st</sup> April**

EN gave feedback from the sub group meeting which covered the issue of participation. There was discussion at the meeting about the Water Matters evenings – there was general agreement that these events were successful, but that it is necessary to build on them in terms of responding to issues raised, through the SWMI report, RBMPs or CSG meetings.

There was also agreement at the sub-group meeting that there is no requirement to hold an “event” this year. It was suggested that efforts should focus on building on Water Matters evenings and feeding into events which are already happening. It was suggested to identify some of the “big” issues coming out of the Water Matters report/evenings. EN explained that PEPG plan to examine the SWMI Digest and Facilitators’ report once they are published to identify the bigger issues raised and look further at how they are being addressed.

It was noted that it is important to develop the CSGs, ensuring that local issues are responded to. There was also the suggestion to engage more with local politicians on WFD. EN explained that this will soon begin to take place with MLAs as DOE officials begin the process of bringing the draft plan through the Committees and Executive. EHS also plan to re-issue invitations to local councillors in a bid to increase participation at the CSGs.

EN made reference to the Awareness Raising Activities spreadsheet and acknowledged the input of the Consumer Council. EN asked for responses to this by 16<sup>th</sup> June.

The 2009 event was also discussed at the sub-group meeting. It was agreed that this should take the shape of 3 evening meetings – one in each River Basin District, during February to March 2009.

**Action: All to provide input to the Awareness Raising Activities by 16<sup>th</sup> June**

#### **5. SWMI Digest**

AMcR confirmed that publication of the SWMI Digest is imminent and that the facilitators' report will be available online too. Hard copies will be distributed to those who wrote in with responses. EN will circulate the link to the two reports when it is available.

**Action: EN to circulate the link to SWMI Digest and Facilitators' report**

## **6. Catchment Stakeholder Group Meetings Feedback**

AMcR provided feedback to the CSG meetings, which have just finished their first 2008 round. He noted that each meeting has had between 30 and 50 attendees. There has been a good representation of voluntary and statutory groups. EHS plan to review the participation of CSGs to encourage more comprehensive and cross cutting representation in all of the Groups.

The forum discussed their feedback to the CSG meetings and it was agreed that attendees are beginning to build relationships in the groups which have met more than once and there has been strong feedback from those who have taken part. It was agreed that the groups should not be a platform for individual issues to take precedence, as this could put attendees off coming again. It was noted that the chair of each group has a challenging role of orientating the meeting, but that this should become easier as each CSG evolves. JG observed that government representation e.g. planning service etc. at the groups has been a positive factor as people feel that their points are being heard by the right people. RM stated that the draft minutes should be distributed more quickly. It was suggested that the paper regarding expectations for the CSGs should be circulated again.

**Action: EHS to circulate the Terms of reference for CSGs**

## **7. A.O.B. and Date of next meeting**

There was no other business. It was proposed that the next meeting take place on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> September at 2:00pm.