

## Minutes of 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting

### Northern Ireland Water Framework Directive Stakeholder Forum

River House, Belfast

19<sup>th</sup> February 2008

Attendance:

George Alexander	NI Water
William Caldwell	DOE (PEPG) – acting chairperson
Séan Convery	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
Brenda Cunning	DOE (PEPG)
Brian Daly	DCAL Fisheries
Joanne Gaffney	Aquaculture Initiative
Uel Irwin	AES Kilroot
Alex McGarel	Freshwater Taskforce (WWF)
Philip McMurray	DOE (PEPG)
Robbie Marshall	Fresh Water Taskforce (UAF)
Brian Murphy	CNCC
Emma Neill	DOE (PEPG)
Gabriel Nelson	DOE (EHS)
Carol O'Boyle	DOE (PEPG)
Jenny Robinson	General Consumer Council NI
Joyce Rutherford	DARD (Environmental Policy)
Norman Simmons	DOE (PEPG)
Stuart Wightman	DRD Water Policy

Apologies:

Michael Bell	NI Food & Drink Association
Gordon Best	Quarry Products Association
Dick James	NI Fish Producers Organisation Ltd
Fergal Kearney	NI Tourist Board
Aileen Lawson	Ulster Farmers Union
Karen McCambley	NILGA
Ian Morrow	NI Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Alex Scullin	NI Agricultural Producers Association
Paul Simpson	DOE
Andrew Sloan	NI Sports Council
Graham Smith	General Consumer Council NI
Trevor Wright	Port of Larne

### 1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2007 were approved, subject to one point of clarification. Alex McGarel (AMcG) expressed some concern at a comment attributed to Angus McRobert, which stated that, according to WFD, economic interests should not be compromised. It was agreed that clarification on this comment would be sought and, if necessary, the minutes amended.

**Action: PEPG to seek clarification on this comment and update minutes if necessary**

## **2. Matters arising from minutes & updates paper**

There were two matters arising: AMcG made reference to the Implementation Working Group, and the Programmes of Measures sub-group, and asked for an update on the structures now in place. It was agreed that an update on the structures now in place would be provided before the next meeting.

Brian Murphy (BM) enquired whether the minutes of IWG/POMs group meetings could be made available. This was agreed.

**Action: PEPG to provide update on the structures now in place.**

**Action: EHS to ensure that IWG/POMs minutes are made available on Website.**

## **3. Shellfish Directive**

Carol O'Boyle (CO'B) gave a brief state of play on the Shellfish Directive, stating that a review is being carried out of Shellfish Water designations, and that there will be a consultation paper issued in May, followed by a twelve week consultation period. Uel Irwin (UI) expressed concern at the possible designation of Belfast Lough, and the resulting potential restrictions on temperature increase of the water. Joanne Gaffney (JG) stated that temperature is not as important as some of the other issues but that it is included in the Directive. CO'B explained that, due to the cyclic nature of classifications, some may not currently be active. JG added however that, if sites are active, it would be a shame for them to be left out. George Alexander (GA) queried whether Belfast Lough might be given a "blanket" designation as a Shellfish Water for the whole area. CO'B responded, saying that areas would be examined on a case by case basis.

## **4. Update on Article 9 (cost recovery)**

Stuart Wightman (SW) gave a brief update on the DRD position following the publication of the second strand of the report on Review of Water and Sewerage Services. The Executive are currently considering the recommendations and in particular options on the future methodology for charging. An Executive Consultation on the report will begin soon. The issue of charging may be the main focus for this consultation, as a methodology has to be agreed in time for water charges to be introduced on 1 April 2009 in line with the current budget.

## **5. Draft RBMP Timetable and Progress**

Gabriel Nelson (GN) explained that the timetable which was consulted upon at the end 2006 is being followed and gave an update of progress. In order that the draft RBMP is approved by the Executive and published by December 2008, the process for clearance through other departments, committees and Ministers will begin in May/June 2008. A "first draft" of the draft RBMP will be completed by this time, more detail added during the summer months, and the final draft will be presented to the Executive at the end of September. GN informed the group that there will be gaps in terms of information in the draft plans, and the plan will be updated during both 2008 and 2009. Brenda Cuning (BC) added that a background briefing paper has been presented to the Minister, which will also be presented to the Environment Committee. This details the timetable for this year in the run-up to production of the draft RBMPs.

AMcG noted that the results of the SWMI consultation will be made available by March, and queried as to how those would be included in the draft plans. GN explained that it is

an ongoing process. There were approximately 260 comments received as part of the SWMI consultation – some of these were regarding areas already included in SWMI document, and a response document will be produced at the end March. Other comments were regarding very specific local issues and, for many of these, action has already been taken under the current regulatory system. Robbie Marshall (RM) asked whether the comments were in fact going to be fed in to the draft RBMPs. GN responded, saying that the comments relating to water management issues e.g. those to do with planning, agriculture etc. would be fed into the draft plans. However, some of the specific issues raised can be addressed now, with no need to delay until the draft plans are produced. Feedback will be given for specific local issues through the Catchment Stakeholder Group meetings. GN emphasised that it is important that those who took part continue to feel that they can directly influence operations.

## **6. Objective Setting**

GN gave a presentation on the WFD objective setting process. It was agreed to circulate the slides from the presentation after the meeting.

Regarding the presentation, RM asked for more information about the elements which support water classification. GN stated that those elements are listed within the Water Framework Directive itself and have been examined through the UKTAG process, including a technical review. It was agreed that the results of the technical review would be circulated. AMcG asked whether temperature is one of those elements. GN acknowledged that there has been problems with incorporating temperature as an element, but that it is included and has already been contained in other directives e.g. Shellfish Directive.

AMcG enquired how the objectives for “Good Ecological Potential” (GEP) are reached. GN conveyed that e.g. in the case of Heavily Modified Water Bodies, the approach was to identify all the mitigation measures that could be carried out to ensure that the water body is as good as it can be. However, GN confirmed that the process to decide the biological elements and metrics to define “Good” status is still ongoing so defining “GEP” remains difficult at this time. However, discussions are ongoing at a European level to decide upon best practice in this area and EU CIS Guidance does allow for the use of best practice mitigation measures when defining GEP. JG asked whether a “blanket” approach would be taken in terms of setting objectives for water bodies which are not heavily modified or artificial. GN stated that there are a number of different types of river and lake in Northern Ireland and different standards, therefore different objectives apply. Classification for specific water bodies will be available within the RBMPs in an understandable way. The information to support this is based on several years’ worth of research which is by its nature complex, so this will be made available by means of online supporting reference documents.

RM asked who decides the contents of the plan in terms of high, good, moderate, poor, bad. GN acknowledged that this will be open to debate, and that the decision about how to spend government money is a matter for Ministers and hence Northern Ireland as a whole. BM enquired about the involvement of the Commission during this process. GN responded that the UK will report to the Commission in March 2010. The Commission is aware that the majority of the first plan will detail measures included in other Directives plus some additional issues, but the second plans will allow the Commission to contrast and compare depending on what has been achieved in the first river basin planning cycle.

AMcG queried the difference between measures that are “funded” or “not funded”. GN explained that funded measures referred to those for which we know funding has already been allocated until March 2011. AMcG asked whether this meant that no money had

been committed during the current Programme for Government. GN clarified that although the key building blocks are in place, we have not produced the draft plans yet, so no specific funding has been allocated, and this cannot be committed until the final plans are decided upon.

Joyce Rutherford (JR) asked how the promotion of funding for different measures would be prioritised. GN explained that actions would be prioritised in terms of which has most beneficial impact – this would therefore necessitate discussion with other agencies.

UI asked how Water Quality in Northern Ireland compares with Republic of Ireland. GN responded that in some areas, there have been improvements in terms of chemical classification but deterioration in terms of biological classification. However, WFD requires that additional biological elements are taken into account as well as chemical and biological.

BM stated that the issue of Climate Change is becoming more significant to the Commission and should be taken into account. In addition BM affirmed that there should be more consideration and ongoing research around the issue of morphology. GN agreed, stating that UKTAG is working on the issue of morphology in parallel, as are other Member States. GN added that there have been a number of successful restoration schemes in other parts of the UK, but with little follow-up monitoring to assess their success.

BM queried how much funding could actually be invested into WFD, instead of being allocated to other areas. GN said that there may be political debate throughout the River Basin Planning process, but that this is an opportunity to see where real improvements can be made. He emphasised the importance of hearing feedback from interested eNGOs during the consultation period.

AMcG asked what may happen in the event of 2015 targets or 2027 targets being missed. GN answered that the Commission must be satisfied that this is a “real” plan, with measures that have the commitment of appropriate funding, regulations etc. The Commission should be satisfied that reasonable actions have been taken.

JG asked if there was information available about protected areas. BM stated that he thought this would be available. JG agreed to make enquiries regarding data available on protected areas including mapping and locations.

RM voiced his concern at the negative projections regarding obtaining good status by 2015. He emphasised that some water bodies are under significant pressure and action should be taken soon. He stressed the importance of remaining positive at this early stage towards achieving good status in our water bodies.

**Action: Presentation and UKTAG technical review results to be circulated amongst Forum members.**

**Action: Joanne Gaffney to make enquiries regarding data available on protected areas and report back to group.**

## **7. Contributions to POMs catalogue**

GN presented a draft version of a questionnaire which EHS plan to use to capture information about local projects relevant to WFD. He explained to the group that EHS would like views on whether this would be a helpful way forward in obtaining that information.

RM asked whether the Council Biodiversity Officers would be tied into that process. GN replied that they would be involved, and that a joint workshop had been held with the biodiversity officers several weeks previously.

Brenda Cuning (BC) emphasised that this is a data capture sheet which could be used by the biodiversity officers and in the CSGs. She asked whether some examples added to the questionnaires would be useful in helping people to fill it in. This was agreed by the group. GN highlighted that this questionnaire should not be put out cold, but that it should be explained through the Biodiversity and Catchment Officers, and also through the Stakeholder Forum members to their colleagues and peers.

UI asked whether examples from industry should be included. GN said that this was an interesting point and JG agreed, stating that it would be good to share information. AMcG expressed that it may be useful to split up water efficiency issues and water environment issues. It was agreed that once the document is finalised, it would be made available on the Website in order to be circulated more effectively.

**Action: EHS to make Environmental Projects Questionnaire available on the Website**

### **8. Public Awareness Campaign – FWTF Proposal**

AMcG introduced the paper from Freshwater Taskforce by giving some background to the proposals. For World Wetlands Day 2007, FWTF and Sustainable Water Network (SWAN) held a series of events which involved angling, farming and tourism interests, school-children and people in the street. Following this, FWTF and SWAN put forward proposals for developing an all-island strategy to develop public participation in WFD. At a subsequent meeting, DOE Minister Arlene Foster suggested that WWF come forward with key messages.

AMcG emphasised that public participation is a requirement of WFD, and said that an awareness campaign was needed to raise public awareness of the draft River Basin Management Plans. She suggested that the Forum consider the messages in the FWTF proposal and send views to the Minister.

Summarising the key messages, AMcG made the following points:

- Domestic Water Use – need for emphasis on efficiency, with the onus on the water provider to relay this message. However, there could be a difficulty, with the message not necessarily being taken up well by the public. Therefore some responsibility should rest with the DOE.
- Dangerous Substances – this includes everyday chemicals such as oils, paints, pesticides, detergents, which people need to be made aware of.
- Invasive Species – more information was needed to avoid people adding to the problem through careless disposal.
- Imported water – would like a campaign to touch upon this issue.
- Value of wetlands – the World Wetlands Day events showed that people knew about and valued their local wetlands. There is a need to remind them that RBMP can help protect this enjoyment.
- New / Existing Projects – there are many projects which are not publicly-funded. The previous item on the agenda would help capture information on these.

AMcG said that it would not be appropriate for just the environment sector to drive these messages and put them forward for the whole Forum to endorse.

GA advised the Forum that NI Water is proactive in education in this area, with a team taking water issues into schools. Other examples he gave included the Water Bus, interactive DVDs, schools competitions, a heritage centre at Duncrue Waste Water

Treatment site and a new visitor site for the Silent Valley reservoir, leaflets on all aspects of water treatment (e.g. bag it and bin it campaign), support for Water Aid, information to all councils and the provision of 'Hippos' for cisterns. GA went on to add that NI Water attended all the major shows, with one element of the stand being a challenge to taste the difference between tap and bottled water.

In response to a question from AMcG, GA acknowledged that it was predicted that water consumption would continue to rise, reflecting current lifestyle (e.g. power showers).

GN said that there was a need for something to tie in with the plan, and advised the Forum that 3 new corporate communication client officers would be in post in EHS by the autumn. He suggested that a partnership approach could be adopted.

AMcG made reference to the Biodiversity campaign, which was well-funded (It's in Our Nature <http://www.biodiversityni.com/>), and said that it would be timely if a campaign could be taken forward for the RBMP.

Philip McMurray expressed some concerns about the timing, in that running a campaign in conjunction with the draft RBMPs could be an inappropriate time, as the plans would still require a lot of work before being published as final plans in December 2009 and the proposed awareness campaign would prejudice the final plans. AMcG replied by saying that better RBMPs would result from people knowing what was being asked of them, and that enough information should be available to enable the public to input to making the final plans.

GN said that EHS were open to having a discussion on how to take this idea forward, perhaps beginning January / February 2009, during the 6 months period for comments on the draft plans. This could include talking about funding, tapping into knowledge of other Forum members and linking with NI Water.

BM said that this was good thinking but stressed that there was a need to be clear about who this was aiming to influence, that perhaps the scope was too wide, and that a smaller, punchier campaign could be better.

JG said that there was a need to get the public to think outside the narrow scope of water charging.

GA queried whether or not anything significantly new would be brought into the draft plans as a result of such a campaign and added that more education on issues was required. Norman Simmons (NS) suggested that the next River Basin Planning cycle would be more suitable for a campaign to influence thinking and behaviours, rather than compressing it for these RBMPs. He also added that it may be too soon to bring forward the concept of 'water footprint'.

AMcG said that people might not heed any call to change within the RBMP, if they felt they had no role in developing it.

## **9. Stakeholder Events 2007 – 2008**

BC briefly updated the Forum on the progress towards publishing the facilitators' report on the Water Matters evenings. A draft version had been received at the end of January, additional information was requested and a new version had been received last week. Once agreed, the report would be published online, with a foreword from DOE setting the context and outlining the next steps.

PMcM asked the Forum to consider what should be next for the annual WFD event. He noted that the Catchment Stakeholder Groups were now up and running, and that in 2009 the focus would be on the draft reports. Taking into account previous ideas, views on the

Water Matters evenings and the proposal for a public awareness campaign, he asked what could be organised for this year.

It was agreed that a sub-group meeting of the Forum should be held, to enable further discussion of the FWTF proposal and the organisation of this year's event.

**Action: Brenda Cunning to arrange Forum sub-group meeting**

BM asked if the CSGs were now closed meetings. GN replied that the future meetings of the CSGs would not be advertised in newspapers etc. but that anyone who is interested can attend the meetings, and that EHS would issue invitations to fill any gaps in the sectors represented on the groups.

**10. Date of next meeting**

It was proposed that the next meeting take place on **Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2008 at 2pm.**