

Note of Meeting

**The Spinning Room, Mossley Mill
25 May 2011**

Attendees:

1. Kerry Anderson, Head of Regional Operations & Agricultural Regulations NIEA (Chair)
2. Jim Bradley, Belfast Hills Partnership (Presenter)
3. David Miller, Senior Water Quality Inspector NIEA (Presenter)
4. Jo Campbell, Acting Catchment Management Officer NIEA (Presenter)
5. Gabriel Nelson, River Basin Planning Group Manager NIEA
6. Wendy McKinley, Head of Freshwater Group NIEA
7. Ciaran Mullan, Ulster Wildlife Trust
8. Uel Irwin, AES Kilroot Power Station
9. Justin Forsythe, NI Pike Society
10. Patricia Magee, Tidy NI
11. Dan Clarke, Lagan Valley Regional Park
12. Stephanie McGee, River Basin Planning Group, NIEA (Note taker)
13. Trevor Ogborn, Dunmurry Community
14. Lindsay Matthews, Biodiversity Officer Newtownabbey Borough Council
15. Michael Shanks, Dromore Angling Club
16. Michael Sloan, Dromore Angling Club
17. Peter Lynch, DCAL Inland Fisheries
18. Gary Houston, Iveagh Angling Club & Ulster Angling Federation (UAF)
19. Judith Bankhead, Conservation Officer, Rivers Agency
20. David McCullough, Northern Ireland Water
21. George Butler, Director of Asset Management, Northern Ireland Water
22. Philip McMurray, DOE Environmental Policy Division
23. Orla Maguire, Biodiversity Officer Belfast City Council

1. Welcome, outline of agenda and introductions

Kerry Anderson opened the meeting and welcomed all to the 8th meeting of the Belfast Lough and Lagan CSG. Kerry introduced himself as the new Chair for the Belfast Lough and Lagan CSG, replacing Dave Foster. Kerry also welcomed Jo Campbell as the new acting Catchment Management Officer for Belfast Lough and Lagan CSG. Those in attendance were invited to introduce themselves to the group.

2. Note of the last meeting and update on progress made in addressing the issues raised at the last meeting.

- 2.1 The note of the meeting held 25th November 2010 had been issued by email and posted to all parties who were present at the last meeting. The note was agreed by the group.

Summary of actions from the last meeting:

Ref	Action	Update
2.1	Helen Nutt to reissue the note of the Belfast Lough & Lagan CSG meeting held on 5 May 2010 for feedback and add the agreed note of the meeting to the website.	Belfast Lough and Lagan CSG website has been updated: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/belfast_lough_and_lagan.htm
3.3	Helen Nutt to find out the timescales for the delivery of the anti-poaching awareness leaflets in minority languages.	Kerry Anderson reported that the leaflets being produced were not concerning anti-poaching but rather information relating to what legal requirements are needed to fish in a DCAL area. The best time scale is that they will be completed this year.
5.2	Dave Foster to provide feedback to Robbie Marshall on NIEA's progress in applying restoration cost fines to identified polluters.	Ongoing: In Dave's absence Kerry reported that NIEA and DCAL are working together closely to develop protocol for restoration costs for reinstating rivers. Legislation requires reinstatement of flora and fauna. Action: Kerry to provide update.
4.7	NIEA to consult CSG attendees on the locating of Water Pollution Hotline signs.	Ongoing: Jo Campbell thanked everyone for their feedback about locations for placement of Water Pollution Hotline signs in Lagan Local Management Area (LMA). 15 signs are available for each LMA. Each will have a unique location code. Three signs will be placed within Lagan LMA by the end of this week. Feedback is welcomed for this project and Jo welcomed feedback for placement of signs in Belfast Lough LMA.
5.6	NIEA to consider all feedback on LMA Action Plans.	Ongoing: This is an ongoing process and Jo Campbell will continue to welcome feedback on the Lagan LMA Action Plan.

Floor opened for questions/comments.

- 2.2 Peter Lynch added that by contacting NIDirect members of the public can report illegal fishing and that this information is available in alternative languages. NIDirect can be contacted by phoning 101 or by email dcalangling@dcalni.gov.uk.

Action: Jo Campbell to add agreed minutes from the Autumn 2010 meeting and the presentations from the Spring 2011 meeting to the Belfast Lough and Lagan CSG website.

3. Belfast Hills Landscape Partnership Scheme – River Awareness Project

Presentation by Dr Jim Bradley - Manager of the Belfast Hills Partnership

A copy of the presentation can be found on the Belfast Lough and Lagan website:

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/belfast_lough_and_lagan.htm

- 3.1 Jim Bradley gave a presentation outlining Belfast Hills Landscape Partnership Scheme - River Awareness Project, which seeks to involve local residents and schools. Jim outlined the importance of relaying to these groups the journey of the river from the source in the hills down to where it meets Belfast. He also described the heritage of the river and what things have changed and remained the same over hundreds of years.
- 3.2 Jim was asked how the River Awareness Project can promote waterfalls, which are known to locals and would be of interest to visitors. Jim said there was an issue with access and health and safety with some of these waterfalls.
- 3.3 Patricia Magee asked how they deal with fly-tipping issues. Jim said there seems to have been a steady decrease in fly tipping. He suggested this may be due to increased access to, and promotion of, recycling or disposal sites or the increased traffic on roads which had previously been remote enough to allow fly tipping. He stated that Local Councils are very effective at removing fly tipped items.
- 3.4 Gary Houston asked about the weir/ hydro scheme that was planned in the Colin Burn. Jim said it was his understanding that this was not going ahead.

4. NIEA Regional Manager Update Presentation from David Miller, Senior Water Quality Inspector

A copy of the presentation can be found on the Belfast Lough and Lagan website:

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/belfast_lough_and_lagan.htm

- 4.1 David gave a presentation on the pollution incidents and prosecutions, giving a breakdown of their severity, source and the outcomes of recent cases. He said that domestic pollution incidents were greatest in number but tended to be less severe in nature. David also said that the unusually cold winter weather we experienced this year may be the reason for the large number of heating oil leaks. He said that heating oil is an extremely toxic pollutant in rivers and that the public is not always aware of this.
- 4.2 Central Chemical Supplies (CCS) breached a Pollution Prevention Notice, which is a new tool against pollution. This appears to have been a very effective tool in this case, as CCS has now improved their operations.
- 4.3 David reminded the group that fines issued to farmers may look small but that a farmer may also get penalised by the cutting of their Single Farm Payment. These cuts to the single farm payment can be quite substantial in comparison and are ramped up for repeat offenders.
- 4.4. David said that the fines for first time offences are usually smaller than those for repeat polluters.

- 4.5. David outlined an incident where a contractor using an umbilical slurry spreader leaked slurry over land and into a river. The farmer who hired the contractor was responsible for the incident and any fines associated.
- 4.6. Glanbia was successfully prosecuted under IPC legislation. For the first time NIEA were able to use photographic evidence from a local angling group during court proceedings.
- 4.7. David outlined an investigation into the long-term pollution of a culverted tributary of the Woodburn River.
- 4.8. Dan Clarke asked for information regarding a pollution incident in May 2011 at Lagan Valley Regional Hospital. David said that the investigation into this incident was ongoing. As the river at this point is culverted it was difficult to locate the source of the pollution.
- 4.9. Trevor Ogborn asked about how we regulate developers/builders and Northern Ireland Water with regards to misconnections. David said it is the responsibility of builders to correctly install connections to sewer. He said it requires a lot of time from NIEA to investigate this issue as in many instances, they have to go door to door to check connections.
- 4.10. Trevor Ogborn asked how NIEA goes about setting and policing consents and whether consents have a lifespan. David said consents do not have a lifespan but remain in place unless NIEA see the need to review. Kerry suggested a member of the Consents team comes to a future meeting to give a presentation on how NIEA sets consents.

Action: Jo Campbell to arrange presentation by member of the NIEA Consents Team at future meeting.

- 4.11. David was asked if polluters receive reinstatement costs along with fines. David said NIEA are only able to instigate criminal prosecutions resulting in fines for pollution but that angling clubs are able to proceed with civil prosecutions to attempt to recover costs for loss of fish. Iveagh Anglers have taken a successful civil case against Central Chemical Supplies for fish kills.
- 4.12. George Butler stated that the main problem for Northern Ireland Water (NIW) at this time is blocked sewers and soft blockages in sewage pumping stations, which do not trigger an alarm. NIW are in the process of installing Intelligent Pumping Station Managers, which detect blockages and reverse propellers to remove the blockage. This is an ongoing process and will take time to implement. He also stated that education of the public is very important with regard to disposal of inappropriate items in toilets e.g. cotton buds and nappies. He highlighted NIW's Bag it and Bin it campaign.
- 4.13. Gary Houston acknowledged NIW's recent improvements to WWTWs in Lagan LMA however he said more nutrient removal from WWTW effluent is required. He stated that according to AFBI 30% of nutrient enrichment in rivers originates from WWTWs.

5. Update on Lagan Action Plan & Arrangements for Working in Belfast Lough Local Management Area (LMA)

Jo Campbell, Acting Catchment Management Office, NIEA

- 5.1 Jo Campbell gave a presentation on the implementation of the Lagan LMA Action Plan. She detailed actions which are ongoing
- 5.2 Jo highlighted the importance of reporting agricultural problems you encounter as these are referred to NIEA Agricultural Regulations Team to investigate and often result in breaches through DARD.
- 5.3 Jo talked about the launch of the Pollution Hotline Signage Project by John McMillan NIEA Chief Executive and Enler Anglers. This project is ongoing and further feedback concerning sign locations is welcomed.
- 5.4 Jo introduced the new publication from NIEA "*Northern Ireland Water Management Facts and Figures 2011*". This pocket sized reference book will be produced annually and contains facts and figures concerning water quality.
- 5.5 Jo talked about the Belfast Lough and Lagan LMA e-newsletter as an ideal medium for stakeholders to publicise organisations, events or projects. Previous e-newsletters can be viewed at the following page on the NIEA web site:
http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3/lma_e-newsletters.htm
- 5.6 NIEA has started to create an inventory of physical structures. Jo asked that angling groups and stakeholders consider being involved in the gathering of this data. A form for the collection of data on the location of smaller weir has been circulated to the UAF for comments. To date 5 weirs in Lagan LMA have been assessed.
- 5.7 The winners of the WATER Environment Community Awards will be announced by Alex Atwood Minister for the Environment at an awards ceremony at Stormont on 26th May 2011.
- 5.8 Jo talked about the Ballinderry pilot of the Anglers Monitoring Initiative which will be reviewed by July 2011.
- 5.9 Anyone that is interested in setting up a River Trust can talk to Mark Horton of the Ballinderry River Enhancement Project. NIEA have secured funds for 2011-2012 to support the formation of new Trusts. The Ballinderry River Enhancement Project can be seen on the following web site: <http://ballinderryriver.org/>
- 5.10 Belfast Lough LMA will be the prioritised LMA for 2011 and we would like feedback from stakeholders to feed into the Action Plan for Belfast Lough LMA. The group was encouraged to use the questionnaire and maps provided.
- 5.11 Jim Bradley asked how the reduction in Single Farm Payment for polluting farmers worked. Kerry Anderson explained that we report incidents to DARD and they make the decision on reductions to payments. NIEA do not find out the details of these cases and are only able to take criminal prosecution cases.
- 5.12 Peter Lynch stated that with regards to weirs, the best solution is removal. To do this you need to buy the weir and water rights. He stated that weir removal in the United States had been very successful. He asked if NIEA was considering the removal of weirs. Gabriel Nelson said that DEFRA have removed some weirs in England and that there will be a

process in Northern Ireland where weirs are surveyed and those that are suitable for removal will be identified. At this point there would be a bid for funding for a removal project. Gabriel also stressed that industrial and historical importance would also be considered when surveying weirs for removal.

- 5.13 Gary Houston said Iveagh Anglers would be interested in initiating a weir removal project in the Mid and Lower Lagan as some members possess ownership rights to weirs.
- 5.14 Trevor Ogborn asked if the removal of weirs would affect the heavily modified status of some water bodies. Gabriel said that many different factors are considered when designating a water body as heavily modified and that it was unlikely that removal of weirs alone would affect heavily modified status.
- 5.15 Trevor Ogborn asked how often farms are inspected after pollution incidents have been identified. David Miller said that incidents are followed up until matters are resolved.
- 5.16 Gary Houston (GH) stated that as far as he was aware NIEA provides funding towards the Lagan Canal Trust. He also asked Gabriel Nelson (GN) why he sat on the Board of the Lagan Canal Trust, which he stated did not comply with the Water Framework Directive as the Canal Trust intends to dredge the Lagan and build new weirs. GN replied that he sits on the Executive Committee of the Trust as a NIEA representative and that his role was to provide input on the potential environmental impacts on the water environment to be addressed as part of any proposed reinstatement of the canal. GN also added that NIEA had a wide remit including historical archaeology and industrial heritage. GN stated he did not know if NIEA still provides funding but that this could be confirmed. GH replied that NIEA's remit did not include breaching European Directives. Kerry Anderson said he was aware of council funding but not NIEA funding.

Action: Jo Campbell to clarify the position of NIEA with regard the Lagan Canal Trust and if NIEA provides funding.

6. Close

Kerry Anderson thanked all attendees, speakers and Newtownabbey Borough Council for use of the meeting room in Mossley Mill and closed the meeting.

Summary of all actions arising from the meeting:

Ref	Action
2.2	Jo Campbell to add agreed minutes from the Autumn 2010 meeting and the presentations from the Spring 2011 meeting to the Belfast Lough and Lagan CSG website.
4.10	Jo Campbell to arrange presentation by a member of the NIEA Consents Team at future meeting.
5.16	Jo Campbell to clarify the position of NIEA with regard the Lagan Canal Trust and if NIEA provides funding.