

Bush & Glens Catchment Stakeholder Group

Minutes

08 April 2008



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Bush and Glens Catchment Stakeholder Group (CSG)

**7pm Tuesday 8th April 2008
Londonderry Arms Hotel, Carnlough**

Attendees:

Claire Vincent	Head of Marine Assessment and Licensing Team, EHS (Chair)
John Hill	Regional Manager, EHS
Helen Nutt	North Eastern Catchment Officer, EHS (Note-taker)
Beverley Connolly	Water Quality Inspector, EHS (Note-taker)
Paul Burnside	Water Quality Inspector, EHS
Richard McFaul	Water Quality Inspector, EHS
April Thompson	Water Quality Inspector, EHS
Judith Bankhead	Conservation Officer, Rivers Agency, DARD
Roy Carton	
Seamus Connor	DCAL, Inland Fisheries
Raymond Dougal	Dougald Mussels
Joanne Gaffney	Cross Border Aquaculture Initiative (CBAIT)
Barbara Hamilton	Premier Power Ltd.
Brendan Kerr	Natural Living Assets
Tom Lavelle	Glens Angling Club / Ulster Angling Federation
Jim McCarlie	East Antrim Boat Club
Hugo McCormick	Glens Angling Club
Dave McCrum	NI Water
Cara McCusker	Biodiversity Officer, Larne Borough Council and Moyle District Council
Alex McGarel	WWF
Kevin McGarry	Moyle District Council
Jim McNamara	Rivers Agency, DARD
Michael McKeever	Glens Angling Club
Alan Morrow	Countryside Management Branch, DARD
Sharon Morrow	Friends of Larne Lough
Delphine Pouligny	Cross Border Aquaculture Initiative (CBAIT)
Dessie Robinson	NI Water
Alan Scott	East Antrim Boat Club
Maurice Turley	National Trust
Donald Walker	
Trevor Wright	Larne Harbour Master
Ian Wright Turner	Forest Service, DARD

1. Welcome and introductions

Claire Vincent opened the meeting and welcomed all. Those in attendance invited to introduce themselves to group. Round room introductions.

Claire Vincent, Head of Marine Assessment and Licensing Team, Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) presentation; "Bush and Glens Catchment Stakeholder Group – Welcome and Introductions"

Claire Vincent recalled that the purpose of the last meeting had been to collate significant water management issues and that the aim of the forum was to resolve local issues, through providing help, support and advice. She laid out the terms of reference for the group. Claire also highlighted that she saw her role as chairperson of the group, only to be a temporary measure and should the members wish they could appoint their own chair, though EHS would still facilitate the group.

2. Pollution issues and investigations

John Hill, Regional Manager, EHS presentation; "Pollution Incidents and Investigations in the Area"

John Hill gave a presentation to the group on the range of work staff in the area complete in relation to pollution incidents and prevention and progress made. Floor opened for questions/comments.

- 2.1 Maurice Turley asked how many rivers were sampled in the catchment.

Claire Vincent said there was a program for sampling both the chemical and biological quality of the rivers. Helen Nutt said that around twenty sites are monitored for biological quality and chemical quality in the Bush and Glens area and that all monitoring results are available on the EHS website.

- 2.2 Jim McCarlie asked if an update on the situation at Ballylumford Power Station could be provided. He said that during the previous week the whole surface had been awash with what looked like soap suds.

Claire Vincent said that an investigation had started in 2006 and that it was still ongoing. A number of water samples had been lifted three weeks ago and that these had been sent to England for analysis. Claire said that a meeting with Premier Power had been scheduled for several weeks time to discuss the foaming incidents.

A member of the group said that the fibreglass boats in Larne Lough had suffered a marked deterioration at the water line.

Barbara Hamilton said that the foaming from the power station was natural and caused as a result of cooling water being brought into the plant. She said that the water was being screened to remove debris e.g. small marine plants and animals. These were getting caught on the screens and mashed, creating a protein soup which was then lying on the top of the water. She said that when the soup became aerated, foam was being created. Barbara Hamilton said that tests had been carried out by their experts and that these had shown that the foam was completely harmless.

Joanne Gaffney said that aquaculture in Larne Lough was appearing to be impacted, and that this correlated with discharges from Premier Power. She said that something was adversely affecting the growth of shellfish in the Lough.

Claire Vincent replied that she had visited a shellfish grower recently and he believed that the situation was improving, and spat-fall had increased. She said that two samples had been taken last year; one was satisfactory but the other showed toxicity which is being further investigated. She said that the new sewage treatment facilities at Larne were now in operation and that the improved level of treatment would reduce the levels of nutrients in the Lough.

Delphine Pouligny asked if samples collected by locals would be accepted by EHS.

Claire Vincent said that EHS had accepted such samples in the past but there were many difficulties with non-EHS staff collecting samples for use in pollution investigations as specifically treated bottles are required to collect certain types of samples.

**ACTION: EHS to meet with Premier Power to discuss foaming.
(ACTIONED: 24.04.2008)**

- 2.3 Donald Walker asked how many statutory samples had been lifted from the River Bush.

John Hill said that he was not aware of any samples which had specifically been taken from the River Bush, but that 18 statutory samples had been lifted from farms in the area in the last 6 months.

Helen Nutt said that routine monitoring is also carried out on the River Bush.

Kevin McGarry said that it would be useful for the group to see the sites sampled and water quality at those sites.

ACTION: Helen Nutt and Paul Burnside to ascertain the exact number of statutory and routine monitoring samples collected from the Bush River and to continue to liaise with Mr. Walker.

- 2.4 Raymond Dougal asked what fines could be imposed with respect to a water pollution incident.

Claire Vincent said that the maximum fine under the Water Order was £20,000. She said that it is the judiciary that set the fines. She added that although the fines themselves may sometimes be small, the costs could be significant.

John Hill said that since February/ March this year, EHS must recover costs from medium and high severity incidents even if the case does not go to court.

3. Pollution issues and the way forward for the group

Helen Nutt, North Eastern Catchment Officer, EHS presentation; "The role of the Catchment Officer and the way forward for the group"

Helen Nutt outlined her role as the Catchment Officer for the area and highlighted the region included within the Bush and Glens catchment. A number of ongoing water quality projects, including targeted catchment action plans, were highlighted. Floor opened for questions/comments.

ACTION: All relevant parties to return PAIRS forms

http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/water/wfd/public_partic/pairs.htm to Helen Nutt (Helen.Nutt@doeni.gov.uk).

- 3.1 Donald Walker asked where the thousands of tonnes of waste that had been dumped near the River Bush, had come from.

Ian Wright Turner said that if Donald Walker was referring to the treated sewage sludge material that was being used in the catchment that this was being used in forests managed by Scottish Woodlands.

Kevin McGarry said that EHS issued the appropriate waste licences for this material, to a private contractor

- 3.2 Alex McGarel asked if there was a link between substantiated pollution incidents and non-compliance under Cross Compliance.

Alan Morrow said that information relating to farm related pollution incidents is reported back to DARD. He said that depending upon the offence e.g. a nitrates issue there would be a breach pursued under the Nitrates Directive.

ACTION: Claire Vincent to seek clarification of the process involved between substantiated pollution incidents and Cross Compliance breaches.

- 3.3 Brendan Kerr said that EHS was currently presenting itself as the main body policing pollution incidents. He said that FCB and DARD also had responsibilities so there appeared to be a number of bodies doing the same thing.

Claire Vincent said that EHS were the environmental regulator and prosecutor though other groups did have an input. She outlined that the Environment Minister is currently considering the arrangements following the Review of Environmental Governance in Northern Ireland Report. She is due to make an announcement before the summer.

- 3.4 Raymond Dougal said that there appeared to be a lack of communication between EHS, DARD, and Food Standards Agency.

Claire Vincent said that there is good communication between EHS, DARD and FSA but it is essential that shellfish growers immediately report anything suspect to the pollution hotline and not wait until their shellfish sample results were classified as poor.

Alan Morrow said that if an individual reported an incident through EHS' pollution hotline (0800 807060), that the problem would be highlighted to DARD's Countryside Management Branch who will contact the farmer to offer advice.

- 3.5 The panel was asked if there was a chronic problem with the number of septic tanks.

Claire Vincent said that septic tanks could be a factor in declining water quality and that EHS had commissioned a study to assess the relative impact of septic tanks. Joanne Gaffney said that septic tanks are a national problem, having been raised at every stakeholder group meeting.

Donald Walker asked who checked septic tanks as a number of houses on septic tanks had been discharging grey effluent into the rivers.

John Hill said that EHS issue consents for septic tanks and that at least one visit was undertaken prior to the consent being issued to ascertain whether it would work effectively. John said that if a problem is raised through the pollution hotline (0800 807060) that EHS would investigate.

- 3.6 Sharon Morrow said it would be really useful if the group could be provided with information on the 22 storm overflows to Inver River.

Dave McCrum said that there have been considerable improvements to the sewerage infrastructure in Larne. He said that a number of retention tanks had been fitted and the overflow blocked off. He said

that where there was a combined system, there has to be some relief mechanism. Dave said that the majority of incidents attributed to NI Water had arisen due to sewers/ pumping systems being blocked with sanitary material. He said that the public needed to be educated in what can and should not be flushed into the sewerage system. He said that if an overflow was operational in dry weather that NI Water should be informed as soon as possible.

Claire Vincent said that the Inver River had good classifications under the EHS General Quality Assessment (GQA) monitoring program.

- 3.7 A member of the group said that Planning Service was responsible for contributing to pollution as the infrastructure was inadequate for the number of new properties being built.

Dessie Robinson said that NI Water was now stopping further development in areas where the sewers were inadequate. He said that new Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) had been proposed for Ballycastle and Ballybogey and that £1,000,000 per day was being spent on new works. He said that the new Larne WWTW had the capacity to accommodate future development to 2030.

Claire Vincent said that there is a pressure on EHS from developers to consent small sewage works to service new houses in areas where the existing public system has no further capacity. She said that this could create problems with overall sustainability, and that it could also be difficult to police unscrupulous developers.

The group suggested said that it would be useful to have a presentation from NI Water at a future meeting and that this should include some information on Combined Storm Overflows (CSOs) in the Larne Lough catchment. Dave McCrum agreed that he would be content to present at a future meeting.

ACTION: Helen Nutt to discuss potential for NI Water presentation at a future meeting with Dave McCrum.

- 3.8 Kevin McGarry said that this was a useful forum and asked if it would be possible to circulate field staff contact details so that in the case of a pollution incident, they could be contacted directly.

John Hill said that the 24 hour pollution hotline number (0800 807060) was the best and most efficient was to contact EHS as this ensured that the staff on-call in the area got the information as quickly as possible.

- 3.9 Trevor Wright said that there appeared to be a lack of council involvement within the stakeholders groups.

Helen Nutt said that invitations to attend the group had been sent to all of the local Council and that there were a number of representatives present at the meeting. She said that she would continue to invite the Councils to the meetings and anyone else that member of the group would like to involve.

- 3.10 Brendan Kerr asked what could be done by the group/ public to assist EHS.

Helen Nutt said that it appeared to be primarily anglers who contacted EHS with the majority of pollution incidents and that EHS were keen to encourage all to continue with promoting the Pollution Hotline (0800 807060) and the reporting of pollution. She asked that people let EHS know of problems as soon as possible as the extra eyes and ears were needed. She asked that if anyone had specific concerns over a stretch of water that they could discuss them with her.

The panel was asked if anglers or other interested parties could be provided with literature to help them identify pollution.

Helen Nutt said that there was a series of EHS educational leaflets available that could be provided through her and that she could be contacted for more details.

4. Plans for the next meeting

- 4.1 Helen Nutt asked the group what presentations would like to see at future meetings.

Claire Vincent suggested that a presentation on monitoring carried out within the catchment could be of use to the group. Claire said that EHS's Agricultural Regulation team had said that they would be happy to present at future meetings.

Helen Nutt said that DARD Forestry had offered to present at a meeting.

Joanne Gaffney said that it would be useful to cover the legacy of forestry within the presentation.

4.2 Helen Nutt asked whether the group wished to have a presentation from EHS on the draft waterbody status classifications and draft River Basin Management Plans. She suggested that this might help the group to identify which priorities within the catchment they would like to focus on in future. The group agreed that it would be useful to be kept up to date with EHS's work through the meetings.

ACTION: Helen Nutt to arrange for a presentation to be given at the autumn meeting on classifications and the draft RBMPs.

(ACTIONNED: 17.07.2008)

4.3 Helen Nutt asked that anyone who had not had a chance to raise an issue of importance to them at the meeting contact her. She said that the next meeting would be held in six months time. It was agreed that meetings should be spread out around the catchment so that all areas could be covered and travelling times made as fair as possible.

Claire Vincent suggested that the next meeting be held in Larne in six months time. The floor agreed Larne to be a suitable location.

5. Close

Claire Vincent thanked all for attending and said she had found it a useful meeting and that she hoped for continued progress.

Summary of actions from the meeting:

Ref	Action	Update
2.2	EHS to meet with Premier Power to discuss foaming.	Actionned: 24.04.2008
2.3	Helen Nutt and Paul Burnside to ascertain the exact number of statutory and routine monitoring samples collected from the Bush River and to continue to liaise with Mr. Walker.	Update to be given at next meeting.
3	All relevant parties to return PAIRS forms http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/water/wfd/public_partic/pairs.htm to Helen Nutt (Helen.Nutt@doeni.gov.uk).	Ongoing: A number of forms have been returned.
3.2	Claire Vincent to seek clarification of the process involved between substantiated pollution incidents and Cross Compliance breaches.	
3.7	Helen Nutt to discuss potential for NI Water presentation at a future meeting with Dave McCrum.	
4.2	Helen Nutt to arrange for a presentation to be given at the autumn meeting on classifications and the draft RBMPs.	Actionned: Helen Nutt has raised with RBMP Team.