



THE NATIONAL TRUST

Northern Ireland Freshwater Taskforce
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Mrs Gayle Philips
Environmental Policy Group
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48 High Street
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Dear Gayle

Thank you for inviting the Northern Ireland Freshwater Taskforce to participate in the Water Framework Directive Stakeholder Forum. James Robinson, who attended the first meeting on our behalf, has now reported back to the Taskforce and we felt it would be constructive at these early stages to outline our aspirations for the chair, structure and remit of the Forum.

- Chair: The FWTF accepts it is appropriate for Government to Chair the Forum.
- Structure: The FWTF is disappointed at the lack of representation from the wider industrial sector and urges Government to encourage participation in this area.

The FWTF believes that a work programme for the Stakeholder Forum should be produced, outlining a timetable of key tasks for at least the next three years. As with all documentation produced by the Forum, this plan of work should be made available to the public via the DOE's website.

The FWTF is interested to learn how DOE intends to liaise with other Government departments and agencies. The FWTF is aware that intra-governmental groups exist to address the WFD but remain unsure how they will link to the Forum and how they will influence or be influenced by the stakeholder process. Terms of reference for each of these groups would help clarify their roles and interrelationships.

- Remit: The FWTF firmly believes that the remit of the Forum should be to oversee and facilitate the delivery of the objectives of the Water Framework Directive effectively in Northern Ireland and that its role is to look at ways of meeting those objectives efficiently and with minimal impact on social welfare and economic competitiveness.



The FWTF believes that the stakeholder process must encompass the WFD in its entirety and expects the Forum to be able to comment on and, where necessary influence, all aspects of its implementation, including evolving technical processes such as Characterisation.

The FWTF sees effective river basin management planning as a major component for successful WFD implementation and believes it is necessary to start considering this process as soon as possible. The FWTF also believes the Forum should play a major role in overseeing the structural arrangements for this process and ensuring consistency between approaches taken across the four river basin districts in Northern Ireland.

The Forum should be introduced to inter-calibration procedures taking place at EU level, the development of standards for good ecological status and Northern Ireland's contribution to that process. It should also play a significant role in the determination of heavily modified and artificial water bodies in Northern Ireland and any other decisions made by DOE and others in relation to implementation.

The members of the Forum must be encouraged to be innovative and come up with their own ideas and in order to do this there must be total transparency from Government and a commitment to consider all suggestions.

The Forum should provide an opportunity to resolve conflict between stakeholders without recourse to bipartite meetings.

The FWTF hopes Government and the other Stakeholders will be able to endorse this approach and looks forward to further participation in the Forum.

Yours sincerely

Alex McGarel
(Secretary to the Northern Ireland Freshwater Taskforce)