

Meeting Record of the

Lower Neagh Bann Catchment Stakeholder Group Meeting

1st October 2009, Ballymena Golf Club.

Attendees:

Kieron Callaghan, KC, NIEA

Pat Close, PC, Lough Neagh Fisherman's Co-op

Mary Connacher, MC, NIEA, Regional Operations

Denzyl Dinsmore, DD, Royal Yaughting Association

Stephen Gilmore, SG, Fishing Bailiff

Gareth Greer, GG, DARD, Rivers Agency

Norman Henderson, NH, NIEA

Andrew Hitchener, AH, DRD Roads Service

Brendan Kerr, BK, Natural Living Assets

Mark Livingstone, ML, (Chair) NIEA, Water Management Unit

Conor Lydon, CL, WYG Environmental

Philip Maguire, PM, Moyola Angling Association

Eileen Mallon, EM, (Minutes) NIEA, Water Management Unit

Dave McCrum, DMcC, NI Water

Gary McLoughlin, GMcL, NIEA, Water Management Unit

Brendan McNicholl, BMcN, Moyola Angling Association

Alan Morrow, AM, DARD, Countryside Management Branch

Des Nevin, DN, NI Water

Garry O'Neill, GON, DCAL Fisheries

Maurice Parkinson, MP, Antrim & District Angling Association

Richard Rowe, RR, Clady & District Angling Club

Tom Simpson, TS, Maine Angling Club

Caroline Steele, CS, NIEA

Gerry Wilson, GW, NIEA

1. Introduction

ML welcomed those attending and invited everyone to introduce themselves in turn. ML outlined the agenda and informed the meeting that unless there were any objections NIEA proposed that action points and a note of topics of discussion would be produced as a record of the meeting instead of minutes. No objections were received.

2. Report on action points from last meeting (Eileen Mallon)

Action 1 - All to contact EM with amendments to the minutes.

Response - Action completed

Action 2 - Examples of poor or good practice of floodplain development to be forwarded to EM.

Response - EM reminded stakeholders to forward relevant examples

Action 3 - EM to provide KT with reasoning for the current positioning of monitoring points on the Agivey.

Response - Information provided to Stakeholder. NIEA are currently reviewing the monitoring system in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.

Action 4 - EM to arrange a meeting between local stakeholders, WMU and Land Resource Management to address local concerns regarding landfills.

Response - Initial meeting scheduled for 13th August but postponed by stakeholders. Ongoing communication with all parties and a new date, if appropriate, to be agreed.

Public Register for PPC landfill permits are available to view at relevant Council offices and NIEA in the Klondyke Building, Belfast. Monitoring results collected under the remit of the permit are also available to view.

Cam Road has been designated as a major application (i.e. an Article 31 application). Planning Service is aware of the Cam Road objections have been circulated to the relevant expert consultees. The matters raised will be given careful consideration and the Minister will be fully briefed on the content of the objections. The final decision rests with the Minister.

Action 5 - All to provide feedback on the draft River Basin Management Plans.

Response - Over 1000 comments received. A document detailing how these comments have been incorporated into the final RBMP's will soon be available

on the NIEA website. **Follow on action** - EM to email the link to this site to all CSG members. Information can be found at http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3.htm

3. Catchment Officer (Eileen Mallon) and Regional Managers (Brian Luke) Update (Presentation 1 & 2)

EM emphasised the importance of engaging with stakeholders and outlined examples of how NIEA was working successfully to improve water quality and address stakeholder concerns via, targeted catchment action plans, supporting the development of River Trusts and providing supporting to various NGO's and environmental committees etc.

Action 1: Stakeholders with concerns regarding intermittent pollution or other water management issues to contact EM.

BL outlined the progress made by the local water quality inspectors in the area including pollution investigations, prosecutions, consents etc. BL also described the processes involved in preparing a case for prosecution.

A discussion took place on the NIEA classification of pollution incidents and how this impact was currently assessed. The accumulative affects of a high number of low incidents needed to be addressed. Concern was raised that a fish kill was the only trigger to classify pollution incidents as high. It was suggested that the impact of pollution incidents should not be limited to water quality but should also include the overall impact of pollution to the habitat. A biological assessment should also be carried out to establish the effect on the pollution incident on invertebrate life, plant life, general ecosystem to enable the impact on the whole ecosystem to be established.

Action 2: Details of NIEA pollution incident classification system and the assessment of impact to be presented at next meeting.

Concern was raised regarding poor out of hour's free phone service, and occasion of waiting for over 20 minutes to be answered when reporting an incident was highlighted.

Lack of feedback to bailiffs who had originally reported the pollution incidents was also discussed. The reaction time of NIEA to pollution incidents was discussed. In order to reduce the time period from reporting to arriving at the pollution incidents some regional managers such as BL provided their mobile numbers to key stakeholders.

Action 3: Details of problems with the pollution hotline to be highlighted to NIEA and will be brought to the service provider's attention for feedback.

Action 4: All NIEA staff reminded of the importance of providing timely feedback.

Specific incidents of pollution were discussed with members of the Moyola angling association.

Action 5: BL to follow up on specific pollution incident regarding potato and clipping dumping in river.

Action 6: EM & BL to meet with Moyola anglers to log and address other issues of concern.

4. Selection of Local Management Areas for Implementation of River Basin Management Plans - Gabriel Nelson (NIEA) (Presentation 3)

GN outlined the Local Management Areas within the CSG area and the NIEA proposals on selection for implementation. It was proposed to select 9 out of the 26 LMAs in NI each year for detailed analysis i.e. 1 LMA per CSG. Each LMA would be assessed twice in each 6 year planning cycle. Each LMA was given an "ecoscore" which included impacts on invertebrates (including pearl mussels where relevant), macrophytes and fish for those water bodies not achieving good status. It was proposed that the LMA with the highest "ecoscore" in each CSG would be targeted first before moving onto the next highest in the CSG i.e.

- Lough Neagh would be targeted in 2010
- Lower Bann would be targeted in 2011
- Moyola, Six Mile Water, Main and Braid would be targeted in 2012

This cycle would then be repeated in years 2013, 2014 and 2015.

During discussion it was suggested that resources should be targeted at the poorest quality feeder rivers flowing into Lough Neagh rather than focussing attention on the Lough itself. Others thought as Lough Neagh was a major drinking water source it was important that it was targeted first. The spread and role of the Zebra mussel was also discussed. GN confirmed that work in the Lough Neagh LMA would include addressing problems in the rivers flowing directly into the Lough.

Action 7: Details of the distribution of zebra mussels to be provided by EM to TS and at the next meeting.

Action 8: All invited to contact EM with suggestions and comments on the LMA selection proposals.

5. Discussion on the future of the CSGs

The ownership of the CSG should ideally be by the local stakeholders. Independent chairs were encouraged and draft terms of reference for the chairs were made available to those attending. Ideas on improving the format of the meetings, encouraging attendance, producing better agendas etc were welcomed.

Action 9: All with comments/suggestions on how the CSGs can be improved to contact EM.

The next meeting will be held in Spring 2010.

Draft