

Erne Melvin Catchment Stakeholder Group

Minutes of meeting

Tuesday 8 June 2010

Venue: Castle Archdale Country Park, Irvinestown, Co Fermanagh

Attendees

Jack Spratt (Chairman) **JS**
Diane Black (NIEA WMU) **DB**
Norman Henderson (NIEA WMU) **NH**
Alvin Wilson (NIEA WMU) **AW**
Ken Moore (NIEA NH) **KM**
Alan Keys (Ballinderry Fish Hatchery) **AK**
Stephen Hey (Kesh Angler) **SH**
Deirdre Spillane (NIEA WQI) **DS**
Gareth Greer (Rivers Agency) **GG**
Paddy McCrudden (Rivers Agency) **PMcC**
John Gilmore (NIEA WQI) **JG**
Gerry Blake (NIEA WQI) **GB**
Derek Thornton (Farmer) **DT**
Andrew Wilson (Farmer) **Andrew W**
Mike Kingston (Inland Waterways Association of Ireland) **MK**
Ailish Keane (NRFB) **AK**
Michael Martin (Fermanagh Anglers) **MM**
Grainne O'Connor (FDC) **GO'C**
Leslie Craig (UFU) **LC**
Phil Cargill (Waterways Ireland) **PC**
Ian Cooke (*A Holiday Visitor to NI*) **IC**

Apologies

Robbie Marshall (UAF)
Victor Chambers
Haidee Chamberlain (NIEA NH)
Joanne Livingstone (Catchment Management Officer)

1. Welcome and Introduction

Jack Spratt welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the group for his election as chair of the Erne Melvin Catchment Stakeholder Group and for Kerry Anderson and Norman Henderson for their previous work as chairs.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes from the last meeting held on 18 November 2009 were agreed as an accurate account of the meeting and proposed by AW and MM. The minutes will be made available on the NIEA webpage http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/erne_and_melvin.htm

3. Matters arising

Table 1: Summary of the action points from the previous meeting were presented but not discussed.

Ref	Action Point	Action	Update
Action points from meeting 13 May 2009			
AP 4	3	GN to raise the issue of litter being deposited on land from rivers at the Inter-Departmental WFD implementation Group.	Responsibility may lie with a number of Agencies however on private land the primary responsibility lies with the land owner. Rivers Agency would only remove litter in a watercourse if it was restricting flow. The District Councils will only remove litter deposited on public property. Where debris is clearly as a result of storm overflows, NIW have removed debris from land. In a number of cases consent conditions provide for this removal.
Action points from the meeting Wednesday 18 November 2009.			
AP 1		NIEA to consider with Waterways Ireland better ways of enforcement of the Erne Regs. and discuss with FDC potential improvements in the on-shore facilities.	Meeting with WI and NIEA took place on 8 th June 2010. AW to provide summary covering issues discussed at the next CSG meeting (16/11/2010). NIEA WQI's carry out Prevention of Pollution (Erne System) Regulations inspections as part of their regulatory role. All craft with engines of more than 10bhp on the Erne System must be registered with Waterways Ireland. The registration must be displayed on the craft in a prominent position.
AP 2		AW to change the name of the Arney LMA to Lough Melvin & Arney LMA.	Complete. This change has been made.
AP 3		JL to invite Alan Keys to a future meeting to discuss his recent Freshwater Pearl Mussel work in Fermanagh Rivers.	The Catchment Case Study presentation at this CSG meeting is by Alan Keys.

4. Alan Keys (AK) - Restoring the Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)

AK gave presentation on the Freshwater Pearl Mussel (FWPM) lifecycle, pressures impacting the populations. The presentation summarised the findings of the survey of Fermanagh's FWPM rivers commissioned by Fermanagh District Council. The survey covered the Tempo, Swanlinbar and Waterfoot Rivers and made recommendations on actions that could be taken to improve the water environment for mussels. JS thanked AK for his presentation and some questions were raised.

KM asked what influence the quarry industry had on the Swanlinbar area? The view was that it was a pressure and that one of the poorest redox readings was near a quarry. If this type of pressure was resolved then the area could become a good recipient site to relocate isolated FWPM populations. It was agreed that sediment from quarries was a periodic problem.

MG asked what the timescale was for delivery of the projects. AK considered they could be delivered within one year. However, work needed to be started in the sub-catchments and to meet with landowners to discuss actions. A budgeted work plan is also required to support the work should funding become available.

AK explained how the redox meter was used and NH indicated that this may be a useful tool for the regulatory teams of NIEA.

JS asked why these three Fermanagh rivers were selected. AK explained that these rivers were now the only rivers identified by NIEA which supported FWPM. Researchers have predicted that the FWPM will be gone within 3 years if nothing is done. This is not considering the use of captive breeding, however, the most important issue for us, is to improve the condition of rivers to support mussels.

JS also raised a point on that currently lower productivity is seen in Lower Lough Erne. AK indicated that hydro schemes have influenced salmon and trout populations in the area, however actions such as, Marlbank Hatchery, releasing trout fry into the FWPM rivers presence of host fish are increased.

GG asked how sediment sources differed between the 3 targeted rivers. AK explained that silt sources included the flood plain between the Orlagh townland in ROI and the junction of the Colebrooke River needed investigation with regard to silt input and Rivers Agency may be in a position to investigate.

Ongoing major road works at Thompson's Bridge, Kinawley was mentioned by JS and DT. AK indicated that this was an area of concern as conditions were currently poor for FWPM and that relocation to better conditions upstream should be considered. This would be subject to approval from NIEA. It was noted that the road works have discharge consent and measures are in place to prevent pollution from the construction works.

AW asked about the reinstatement potential on Pubble Burn (tributary of the Tempo River) and potential for a buffer area. This was discussed and agreed by AK that a fence with 2 metre buffer would help to stabilise the banks.

The presentation is available on the NIEA webpage http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/erne_and_melvin.htm

5. Deidre Spillane (DS) - Erne Melvin Regional Update

DS gave a presentation on the local water management issues and activities of NIEA water quality field staff since the last meeting in November 2009. DS detailed the number and severity of pollution incidents and gave an update on the ongoing investigation of phytoplankton bloom's on Mill Lough, Bellanaleck.

Concern was expressed over the number of sewage related incidents. DS explained that while there are a number of incidents NIEA are now working closely with NIW to rectify any recent problems. The incidents in this category included NIW overflows, CSOs and WWTWs but incidents were also identified from commercial industrial premises.

SH raised comment on the reduction of phosphates at WWTW in the county, such as Ballinamallard and Kesh, and figures on P removal. It was explained that there was P reduction at most of the large WWTW's in the county. It was asked if the removal of P created additional expense. AW explained that additional sludge disposal, maintenance of dosing equipment and chemicals, plus health & safety precautions, all result in additional costs for the works. Concerns were raised over recent water problems near Kesh works where discolouration was noted in recent days.

AP 1: DS to follow up report of discolouration/pollution near Kesh WWTW.

JS raised concern about an increase in algae which was evident around the Rosscor and Rossigh areas. The algae caused problems for angling in the area and notable during a recent angling event attended by UK anglers who were disappointed by the water conditions during their visit. The complaint was supported by MM. The JG reported that on his last inspection on 7th June 2010, there was a certain amount of algae, however the levels of the Lough were unusually low (estimated 5ft below normal level) and this was resulting in a breakdown of material, now visible in the water. No algal bloom was noted at the visit. GB explained that historical sewage related problems with Enniskillen WWTW were now resolved following recent improvements at the works.

DT raised concern over equity of penalties received by the farming sector e.g. single farm payment, in contrast to NIW penalties. NH gave an example of a recent £15,000 fine for NIW and further consequences due to a reduction in the financial allocation by the Utility Regulator where NIW are found responsible for pollution incidents. It was felt that this should be publicised more. LC also supported concerns that discharge consents should be available to farmers as there appears to be one rule for the agricultural sector and another for the corporate bodies. AW explained that NIW discharges are monitored monthly/weekly for a range of parameters and to make this

equitable farm discharges would need to be monitored and this be unreasonably difficult. Improvements in WWTWs should be relieving pressures in relation to overflows and be demonstrated in future water quality. DS added that in the past Water Service (NIW) had Crown immunity and NIE had no statutory tool to enforce discharge compliance with Water Service.

However, currently any pollution problems are highlighted immediately to NIW, who respond quickly to cooperate.

MM raised comment that the taxpayers are ultimately responsible for paying NIW fines and in particular if water charges are introduced. He suggested that a single responsible person should be prosecuted. MM also asked could DOE Planning Service do more in relation to development and the capacity of works to cope and more green treatment systems, e.g. reed bed sewage treatment at small developments. DS explained that when a planning application is made the receiving WWTW capacity is considered. It was felt that developers should be held responsible and alternative methods of wastewater treatment encouraged. An example was given where NIW refused to take on an additional sewage discharge as the proposed receiving WWTW had reached its full loading capacity. AW added that NIW must take into account loading on WWTW's and the effect on the environment when considering applications. Planning Service can allow development to go ahead but at a phased rate where the receiving WWTW is improved to accommodate the increase in capacity. There are much tighter links between WWTW capacity and further planning developments than in the past.

DT asked at what time of the year did the department receive the reported agricultural incidents. DS explained that there was an increase in pollution incidents in early February and incidents involved e.g. slurry and silage run-off. DS assured the group that the number of agriculture related incidents had decreased.

JS raised concern over the checking of licence permits and highlighted a need for more proactive regulation rather than limit to angling event dates. Andrew W. asked if a problem is identified on a farm, do NIEA work with the farmer to address the situation before seeking prosecution? DS explained that each case is dealt with individually and dependent on a variety of factors.

The presentation is available on the NIEA webpage http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/erne_and_melvin.htm

6. Alvin Wilson (AW) – Lower Lough Erne Local Management Area.

AW gave a presentation on the Lower Lough Erne Local Management Area (LMA) and the development of LMA Action Plans. This led into a workshop to record local issues and actions within the LMA from the Group, which would be used to further inform and develop the Lower Lough Erne LMA Action Plan.

The presentation is available on the NIEA webpage http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/erne_and_melvin.htm

7. Close

JS drew the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for attending, for their valuable input and looked forward to the next meeting (Tuesday 16th November 2010).

Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Water Management Unit
17 Antrim Road
Lisburn
BT28 3AL
Tel: 028 92633499
Email: info@doeni.gov.uk
www.ni-environment.gov.uk