

Minutes of the

# Upper Neagh Bann Catchment Stakeholder Group Meeting

20<sup>th</sup> May 2009. Cookstown Leisure Centre, Cookstown.

## **Attendees:**

Brian Booth (BC), Ballinderry Fish Hatchery

Tommy Conlon (TC)

Denice Corbett (DC), Ballysaggart Lough Environmental Group

Bill Docherty (BD), Glenavy & Crumlin Rivers

Mark Edgar (ME), Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council

Alan Ettie (AE), Banbridge & District Anglers

Alan Fleming (AF), Antrim & District Angling Association

Dympha Gallagher (DG), Northern Ireland Water (NIW)

Norman Henderson (NH), NIEA

Brain Luke (BL), NIEA

Eileen Mallon (EM), NIEA

Caroline Marshall (CM), Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committees

Tommy Marshall (TM), Torrent Trout Farm

Paddy McCrudden (PMcC), Rivers Agency

Alison McCaw (AMcC), NIEA

Michael McKernan (MMcK), NIW

Wilbert Mayne (WM), Ulster Farmers Union

MJ Mitchell (WJM) Sperrin Mountain Spring Fish Hatchery

Davy Millar (DM), NIEA

Ian Needham (IN), NIEA

Gabriel Nelson (GN), NIEA

Jennifer Reeves (JR), NIEA

Ian Simpson (IS), Ulster Farmers Union

Lee Stockman (LS), NIEA

Shane Teague (ST), NIEA

Jim Watts (JW), NIEA

Alvin Wilson (AW), NIEA

<b>Minutes of UNB CSG meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2009</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	
GN opened the meeting and welcomed all. The meeting agenda and draft minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.	
<b>Presentation by Eileen Mallon - Actions from the previous meeting (28<sup>th</sup> October 2008)</b>	
<p>EM provided an update on actions from the previous meeting. (Presentation1 and handout 1). A discussion took place regarding Action 1, the disposal of fallen animals from watercourses. AE asked for clarification on the waterways under Rivers Agency's responsibility. PMcC agreed to provide this information. BB suggested a phone hotline such as 'floodline' should be established to ensure coordination of the issue. PMcC raised concerns regarding the operational costs of hotline numbers. WM asked if clarification on the size of the problem could be obtained before considering solutions. Not all fallen animals in watercourse were the result of deliberate acts, factors such as flooding contributed to the problem. AE stated the Banbridge Club had experience of multiple carcasses. GN stated that it may prove difficult to establish the scale of the problem given the current number of agencies with potential involvement. IN suggested each agency should be requested to monitor fallen animal numbers received in the next 6 months and collate then through EM. It was agreed that a paper would be submitted as suggested in the presentation to the WFD Implementation Working Group on the issue. This interagency group would be asked to assist in collating data on the issue to quantify the problem and consider solutions.</p> <p>A discussion took place regarding Action 4, relating to the Ballygawley road project. AE raised concerns regarding the effect of silt runoff on fish life. IN stated that he had been out on site on numerous occasions but personally had not seen any fish mortalities and had not been presented with any evidence. IN requested anyone with further concerns to contact him outside of the meeting.</p>	<p>Action: PMcC to provide a list of Rivers Agency Designated watercourses to AE</p> <p>Action: NIEA to submit a paper on fallen animal disposal to the WFD Implementation Working Group.</p>
<b>Regional Pollution updates – Presentations by Ian Needham (Armagh) and Jim Watts (Newry) incorporating update from Davy Millar ( Lisburn) and Brian Luke (Ballymena) Presentation 2</b>	
<b>Discussion</b>	
<p>BD queried the number of cases that were taken into consideration in a single court appearance by Ulster Farm By Products (UFBP). He hoped that this would not become the 'norm' for pollution cases. He thought that if each case had been taken to court separately the fines may have been higher. DM explained that the UFBP case had special circumstances, whereby the company wanted to address all the cases together and move on as the plant is now compliant.</p> <p>TC referred to a UTV programme aired on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2009 regarding the new £13M Sewage works for Cookstown. Since the</p>	<p>Action: DG and BL to meet</p>

<p>programme TC has been monitoring the discharge from the works and had gathered video evidence of runoff from the works. GN suggested that pollution problems were best addressed through the pollution hotline to enable NIEA staff to visit the scene when the problem was actively occurring. DG offered to discuss the issue further outside of the meeting with BL, the regional manager for the area and TC.</p> <p>IN highlighted some of the proactive work being undertaken by NIEA in relation to the Blackwater tributaries and suggested more detail was provided at the next meeting.</p> <p>A short discussion took place regarding the NIEA 24hr pollution hotline 0800 807060, its effectiveness, need for centralisation, out of hours response etc. IN encouraged all to use the hotline to report pollution incidents as it was the most efficient method of addressing active pollution. IN welcomed suggestions and ideas from the group on the information the regional managers could present at future meetings, such as how prosecution cases are developed; from taking a statutory sample to court appearance. IN asked the group to forward suggestions to EM.</p>	<p>with TC to address issues with Cookstown WWTW.</p> <p>Action: IN to provide details of Blackwater Action Plan at next meeting.</p> <p>Action: All to forward ideas &amp; suggestions for the regional managers update to EM</p>
<p><b>Presentation by Alvin Wilson, NIEA- The Draft River Basin Management Plans consultation – introduction and scene setting (Presentation 3)</b></p>	
<p><b>Discussion</b></p>	
<p>AE queried if all waterbodies would reach the target of good status by 2015. AW explained that alternative objectives for water quality were permitted under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) i.e. reaching good status by 2027 and not 2015 but these cases had to be justified to the European Commission (EC). If the EC did not accept the justification given then penalties may be imposed. ME questioned why there was no objective set to have a certain % of waterbodies at high water quality status by 2027. AW replied that the targets or objectives would be reviewed every 6 yrs so this may be considered if it was believed to be achievable. GN added that achieving good status was the requirement of the WFD. Waterbodies presently at good status may increase to high status due to improvements made by the Programme of Measures. AW stated that resources would be firstly used to target those less than good then the situation would be reviewed. MMcK commented that the NI objectives were more ambitious than those set by mainland UK. DC asked how many waterbodies still remained to be assessed. GN replied that 38 out of 552 were still to be assessed and this was due to a number of reasons such as health and safety considerations related to access for sampling. These will be assessed and information will be available for the final RBMP in December.</p> <p>IS commented that Lough Neagh was classified as bad and was eutrophic; research had suggested it would take 70 years to reduce phosphorous to an acceptable level. BB added that it took around 7 years for river to cycle through the lough. GN acknowledged that</p>	

<p>nutrient inputs into Lough Neagh had been high for years and measures were, and would be put into place to reduce this input. AW added that the RBMP aimed to identify these pressures and reduce their impact. TC questioned if NIEA had sufficient resources to address all the issues. GN replied that the solutions and responsibility lay not just with NIEA but across all government and non-government bodies; effective collaboration was essential.</p> <p>AE asked when would NIW facilities throughout NI be 'up to scratch'. MMcK explained NIW had a continuous improvement programme. NI has approximately 1200 Waste Water Treatment Works and the larger ones were being upgraded first. EM suggested NIW could provide an update on their Capital Works Programme for the area at the next meeting. DG and MMcK agreed.</p>	<p>Action: NIW to provide an update on their Capital Works Programme for the area at the next meeting</p>
<p><b>dRBMP Feedback sessions – discussion comments</b></p>	
<p>The group was asked to provide comment on the dRBMP consultation questions – the feedback is summarised below.</p> <p>Q1 Do you agree with the objectives and level of improvement set for Northern Ireland's water environment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear process.</li> <li>• Is it possible to for Lough Neagh to reach good status? If phosphate runoff were to cease immediately it would take 60-70 years for the levels to decrease to an acceptable level.</li> <li>• Lough Neagh water quality is the biggest challenge for NI.</li> <li>• Could NI be criticised for being overly ambitious for the targets set for Lough Neagh?</li> <li>• Lough Neagh has a "bad" status. How can we improve this?</li> <li>• Time-frame questionable.</li> <li>• Wider classification of water quality – one parameter fail means total fail.</li> <li>• Phosphate level in Lough Neagh will not improve in the near future despite improved water quality.</li> </ul> <p>Q2 Have we identified the most significant pressures affecting the water environment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is pesticide misuse included?</li> </ul> <p>Q3 Have we identified all the important existing measures that are being used to address these issues? Please identify any important existing measures we have missed.</p>	

- Has provision been made for the reinstatement of the habitat and aquatic life of water bodies after pollution incidents have occurred?
- NIEA lack expertise in fishery and aquaculture skills.
- Lack of integration across agencies.
- The new Wildlife Order has provision for prison sentences for the destruction of habitats, this provision need to be extended to pollution incidents.
- On the spot pollution fines should be used.
- Local abstraction through hydro's needed to be monitored.
- The agency needs to look into cost recovery and rehabilitation.
- Better integration across the agencies is needed.
- Legislation varies across the different agencies and can lead to conflicts instead of support.
- The polluter should pay for the extent of the damage.
- Hydroelectric schemes are not regulated in terms of extraction and flow.
- The efficiency of legislation governing abstraction and the return of flows should be questioned
- Why do rainwater run-off and sewage go to the same place? Separate systems requirement should be in the planning process.
- Pollution from roads is extensive and not measured. For example salt from Airport runway runoff.
- If road run-off has been planned for, why do we have the problem now?
- Should Forestry be allowed to fill trenches with sewage? Work has been done to prevent leakage.

Q4 Can you identify new or existing measures or initiatives, at a regional or local level that you or your organisation can help deliver?

- No monitoring of road runoff but can be a major problem for water quality.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Airport runoff problems e.g. aldergrove di-icing agent reach Lough Neagh in 20 mins of application. This needs treatment before entering a waterbody.</li> <li>• Increase the use of SUDS</li> <li>• Buffers and phased felling of forestry especially near drinking water sources.</li> <li>• More funding for projects such as 'RIPPLE'</li> <li>• Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP's) should be included in the RBMP's</li> <li>• Need to gather information from local angling clubs on the enhancement works carried out. Meeting with the club committee members would be more effective than attending AGM's</li> <li>• How do we educate effectively?</li> <li>• Involvement of local community.</li> <li>• Insufficient control of modification of river.</li> <li>• Different departments need to be aware of each others regulations.</li> <li>• Use of local clubs to liaise with government department.</li> <li>• Immediate action required.</li> </ul> <p>Q5. What suggestions do you have to improve the linkages this plan has with other relevant plans and programmes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No comments made</li> </ul> <p>Q6. Do you have any suggestions to further develop and enhance arrangements for all interested parties to work together on the implementation of the plan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anaerobic digesters – good profit, expensive setup and not ideal weather. They produce fewer pollutants and are more environmentally friendly. However, they still require disposal of final sludge.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p>	
<p>TC requested that acknowledgement be made in the minutes of the retirement of David Wright (DCAL) and sincere thanks noted for all his efforts and assistance over the years.</p>	

<b>Close</b>	
GN thanked all for attending and providing feedback on the dRBMPs The next meeting would be held in the Autumn.	

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