

Lower Foyle Catchment Stakeholder Group

Minutes

Thursday 23 April 2009

Venue: Roe Valley Country Park, Limavady

Attendees:

Norman Henderson – NIEA, Regional Operations (Chairman)
Alan Warwick - NIEA Water Management Unit, Limavady
Mairéad Clarke - NIEA Water Management Unit, Limavady
Simon Gummer - NIEA Water Management Unit, Limavady
Conrad McCormack - NIEA Water Management Unit, Limavady
Nicole McArthur - NIEA Water Management Unit, Limavady
John McCartney – Loughs Agency
Art Niven – Loughs Agency
Jim Haughey – Chairman, Ulster Angling Association
Eamon Mullan – President, Roe Anglers
Philip O’Doherty – Derry City Council
Peter Archdale – Loughs Agency Advisory Forum Member
Gareth Greer – Conservation Officer, Rivers Agency
Joanne Livingstone – North West Catchment Officer, NIEA
Michael McAlary - NI Water
John Kane – DCAL, Inland Fisheries.
Thomas Simpson – Vice-chairman, Roe Angling Association
Howard Carton – Roe Angling Association
Robert McCloy – Ulster Farmers Union
Alan Morrow - DARD Countryside Management Branch
William Ross - Dromboughil Community Association
Alvin Wilson – NIEA, River Basin Planning Group
Gabriel Nelson – NIEA, River Basin Planning Group
Orla Fitzpatrick – Jacobs Consultancy
Warren Boal – Jacobs Consultancy

Apologies:

Deaglan McBride – Section Engineer, Roads Service, DRD
Julie Corry – Biodiversity Officer, Derry City Council

1 Welcome and introductions

Norman Henderson welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited all present to introduce themselves. The action points from the last meeting held on 21 October 2008 were circulated and points addressed.

2 Minutes and action points from last meeting.

Table 1: Summary of action points from previous meeting.

Ref	Action Point	Action	Update	Comment
AP 2	1	JL to give update on progress at Carmoney WTW.	<p>On 23rd March 09 lifted the first set of 4 investigative samples at the discharge point. The 4 sets of samples throughout the year will cover seasonal and tidal variations. We lifted 3 samples one upstream of the discharge point, one downstream and one of the actual 'floc'. The samples are being sent away for 'acrylamide' analysis which is the toxic element of the polyelectrolyte used in the treatment process. The samples are also been analysed in the lab for aluminium, pH and suspended solids.</p> <p>We are also working very closely with NI Water in the development of Drinking Water Safety Plans and have raised the issue of the discharge at Carmoney. NI Water are looking into the prioritisation of this site for improvements.</p>	This item to remain on the agenda.
AP 3	2	NH to provide update on the Lisahally Fish Processing Farm.	This application has been withdrawn.	Completed
AP 4	3	NH to ensure that the Nitrates Directive is a standing agenda item for discussion at future meetings.	<p>X – compliance visits for 2008</p> <p>378 pre-planned visits in total resulting in 97 breaches on 76 farms. Of these 97, 82 were Nitrates breaches breaking down into 48 minimum warning letters, 11 minimum, 13 medium and 10 highs.</p> <p>For Nitrates enforcement referrals there have been approximately 100 in 2008 with circa 120 breaches. No breakdown at present of severity but mostly minimums.</p>	This item to remain on the agenda.

Ref	Action Point	Action	Update	Comment
AP 5	4	JL to invite someone from IPPC to give a presentation at a future meeting.	This can be arranged for the next meeting.	JL to organise for future meeting
AP 7	5	NH to provide update on progress for river bailiffs to take samples for pollution investigation.	Discussions are still on-going.	On-going
AP 12	6	Rivers Agency to provide an update of the new Floods Directive and on proposed flood defence schemes on the Roe at next meeting.	Presentation on the River Roe floodbanks to follow.	Completed
3.3	7	AW to provide Loughs Agency with survey results, when available.	Summary report available.	Completed
4.2	8	NB to consider getting an independent view on the hydro-scheme from a parallel organisation in Scotland or England.	RPS consulting is currently completing the EIA on the scheme; they have subcontracted EcoFact a Limerick based consultancy who are assessing the fisheries aspects of the proposed restoration.	Further update required at next meeting.
4.4	9	NB to advise JL when the consultation meeting will be held and JL to inform the group.	A consultation meeting was held on 16 Dec 08 at Loughs Agency. Stakeholders were shown the design proposals and updated on the EIA work. The design drawings were forwarded to the Ulster Anglers Federation.	Anglers have received no feedback from meeting.

AP 1: Discussion/Comments – Concern was expressed that the issues at Carmoney were not dealt with by the licencing/ discharge consent process. It was explained that the consent has not been breached but the anglers had expressed concern that there is a ‘plume’ at the discharge point which could be caused by excessive polyelectrolyte being discharged. It is unsure if this could be having an impact on the fish so NIEA agreed to carry out investigative monitoring of ‘acrylamide’ which is the toxic element of the polyelectrolyte. Four sets of samples will be lifted throughout the year.

AP 8: Discussion/Comments – Concern was expressed that the question asked was not answered properly – as NIEA are the applicant and the regulator, it would be preferable to have an independent assessment of the

EIA. The anglers expressed concern that they have not had an update for over a year and they did make recommendations and would like some discussion to see if these recommendations were taken on board.

3 Presentation: Update on local quality issues - Alan Warwick

AW gave a presentation on the local water quality issues since the last meeting. A copy of the presentation is available at the link below¹:

http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water/wfd/public_partic/catchment_stakeholder_groups.htm

3.1 AW was asked why figures from farm pollution incidents had gone up and it was explained that this was over a short period of time and may be just a 'blip' as it is believed that on the whole, farm pollution is decreasing, but the data at the next meeting will clarify this. However there tends to be more problems with farms in the summer when the silage is being brought in. Concern was expressed about the increase in agricultural pollution.

4 Presentation: 'River Roe Floodbanks, Limavady'

Warren Boal and Orla Fitzpatrick, Jacobs's consultancy on behalf on Rivers Agency.

Warren Boal and Orla Fitzpatrick gave a presentation on the River Roe Floodbanks.

http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water/wfd/public_partic/catchment_stakeholder_groups.htm

4.1 Concern was expressed that the river is rising and flows are much higher now than they used to be so why is Rivers Agency considering lowering the banks and narrowing the berms when this will obviously lead to increased flooding of the surrounding land. Climate change may also contribute to this problem. It was explained the new banks would provide 1 in 5 year protection which is more than currently available. The new banks will ensure that there is no breaching which is currently the main problem with the existing banks.

4.2 Invasive species, Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed have been identified as a major problem on the Roe and the floodbank project will be developing a 3 year plan to eradicate these 3 species. Concern was raised that this would be not effect as seed banks up-stream would spread down and it would regenerate itself. This issue should be looked at for the whole catchment.

4.3 Concern was expressed that invasive species in the water are a problem and need to be investigated and eradicated. The Roe is designated for its aquatic vegetation. It is possible that the growth of the natural aquatic species in the river have just taken off due to deforestation of the banks allowing increased light leading to a growth spurt.

AP 1: JL to determine what invasive species are present in the river.

¹ If you require a hard copy of any of the presentations please contact Joanne Livingstone – 028 9262 3248

4.4 It was suggested that if the urban drainage in Limavady was improved and SUDS became mandatory there would be less chance of flooding.

5 Presentation: Draft River Basin Management Plans (dRBMP) Consultation - Introduction and Scene Setting – Alvin Wilson, River Basin Planning Group.

Alvin gave an overview of the consultation on the draft river basin plans.

A copy of the presentation is available at the link below:

http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water/wfd/public_partic/catchment_stakeholder_groups.htm

5.1 Heavily modified waterbodies were discussed and it was asked why the Roe is not designated as heavily modified when it has a man-made flood bank around it.

AP2: JL to provide reasons for the Roe not being designated as a heavily modified waterbody.

5.2 Concern was expressed that the Roe hydroscheme would have a detrimental impact and could lead to the river becoming heavily modified. It was explained that the hydroscheme will not classify the Roe as heavily modified and that this scheme will be an example of best practice and will attribute to Governments targets for renewable energy.

It was asked why the Roe hydroscheme could not be planned to be placed beside the abstraction point which is 1 and a half miles upstream as this would considerably lessen the impact on the river?

AP 3: JL to ask Noel Bell if this was considered as an option.

The following is a note of the points arising during the break-out sessions:

Catchment Stakeholder Group meeting - please tick					
Belfast Lough & Lagan	7.4.09	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bush & Glens	5.5.09	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strangford & Lecale	21.4.09	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carlingford & Mourne	12.5.09	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lower Foyle	23.4.09	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Erne & Melvin	13.5.09	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lower Neagh Bann	29.4.09	<input type="checkbox"/>	Upper Neagh Bann	20.5.09	<input type="checkbox"/>
Upper Foyle	30.4.09	<input type="checkbox"/>			

1. Do you agree with the objectives and level of improvement set for Northern Ireland's water environment?

- Not obvious how social need and benefit being assessed.*

- What is "affordable"?
- How to value environment.
- Query technical/cost reasons.
- More information required.
- General agreement can't answer question.

*There was a lengthy discussion on how the 'wider, social need' is assessed. Why does NIEA get to decide what is within the 'wider, social need'? It was explained that cost/benefit analysis will be done, however it was agreed that the environmental benefits which the WFD will bring have not been measured e.g. is moderate good enough? It is not yet possible to cost biodiversity gain, there is just not enough information out there.

2. Have we identified the most significant pressures affecting the water environment?

- Doesn't capture comments of SWMI digest.*
- Need more local detail. For example, there are no details on contaminated sites.

*Concern was expressed that serious issues like 'sullage' and 'septic tanks' which were raised at the SWMI stage have not been included in the plan. It was explained that both these issues are in the plan but both require massive resources to determine historical problems. Closed landfill sites were also identified as a significant water management issue which needs to be addressed in the plan. Concern was expressed that the plan is too generic and like other plans, e.g. the Foyle management plan, it will be shelved. It was explained that the plans will lead to the production of 26 local management plans (3 within each CSG area and the management areas will be prioritised so that improvements are sought for each of the CSG areas). These issues will be looked at in more detail through the development of the 26 local management areas.

3. 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.

- New measures for agricultural waste.

- Use of biodigestors - more incentives.
- Development problems
 - lack of infrastructure
 - more integration
 - local assessments
- No reference to measures to address sillage water problems in urban areas. Collect and treat problem areas.
- New housing. Are controls available?*
- Peat extraction
- Forestry**
- Collaborative research

*There is a need for developments to be checked and approved as part of building control. How can we ensure this happens?

AP 4: GN to raise the issue of how to ensure that misconconnections in new developments are part of building control at the WFD implementation group.

**Forestry was also raised as an issue and it was explained the “Forest & Water guidelines” provide an excellent basis for improvements in forestry practice and that the problem of ‘acidification’ is not as big of an issue nowadays as forestry is not planted as close to rivers as it used to be. Loughs Agency disagreed with this comment as they have just experienced a very serious acidification problem due to deforestation.

AP 5: John McCartney to pass details of this incident to Gabriel Nelson so that it can be fed into the review of the Forest & Water Guidelines.

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

- Need for baseline studies in forested areas.
- Metering of water to reduce usage.
- Targeted catchment fund. DCAL Model.

5. What suggestions do you have to improve the linkages this plan has with other relevant plans and programmes?

- Lack of synchronisation with NIW Capital Works programme.
- Query over why not single plan for IRBD.*

*It was asked what are NIEA doing about 'bad' classifications that are arising from issues in the South and flowing into Northern Ireland. This will be addressed in local management plans and we must ensure that money is available to solve these problems. It was agreed that there needs to be a mechanism developed so that when issues arise there is a way to address the issues together.

6. Do you have any suggestions to further develop and enhance arrangements for all interested parties to work together on the implementation of the plan?

- Publicise LMAS
- Mechanism to deal with cross department issues.
- River trusts

Q. Have you any other issues regarding the wider environment which may be impacted on by the River Basin Management Plans?

Any other comments on the draft Plans ?

6 Close

The Chairman thanked the speakers and everyone for attending and all those who helped with the meeting. Feedback forms were circulated and everyone was invited to submit any topics they would like to see included in future meetings.

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