

Note of Meeting

14 October 2010

Venue: Armoy Community Association, Armoy

Attendees:

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| 1. Claire Vincent | Head of Marine Assessment and Licensing Team, NIEA (Chair) |
| 2. Conor Symington | Regional Manager, NIEA |
| 3. Devina Park | Bush and Glens Catchment Management Officer, NIEA |
| 4. Aideen Kelly | Strangford and Lecale Catchment Management Officer, NIEA |
| 5. Gareth Greer | Rivers Agency |
| 6. David Cochrane | Dundarave Estates Limited |
| 7. Rachel Bain | Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust |
| 8. Donald Walker | North Antrim Anglers Association |
| 9. Brendan Kerr | Ballycastle Angling Club |
| 10. Paddy McCrudden | Rivers Agency |
| 11. Tom Lavelle | Ulster Angling Federation & Glens Angling Club |
| 12. Teddy Roughan | Inland Fisheries, DCAL |
| 13. Martin McAleese | Inland Fisheries, DCAL |
| 14. Michael Fell | Blue Circle Sailing Club Larne |
| 15. Stephen Loughridge | Blue Circle Sailing Club Larne & Larne Lough Wildfowlers |
| 16. Robbie Marshall | Ulster Angling Federation |
| 17. Uel Irwin | AES Kilroot Power Station |
| 18. Karen Dickson | Planning Service |

1. Welcome, outline of agenda and introductions

Claire Vincent opened the meeting and welcomed all. Those in attendance were invited to introduce themselves to the group.

2. Note of the last meeting and update on progress made in addressing the issues raised at the last meeting.

The note of the last meeting was agreed.

3. River Bush Habitat Restoration Project

Presentation from Gareth Greer, Rivers Agency

Gareth Greer gave a presentation on the nursery habitat restoration project carried out on the River Bush downstream of Stranocum. The project was initiated following discussions between DCAL, Rivers Agency, North Antrim Anglers Association and NIEA. He gave an insight into the historical background behind the current condition of the River Bush, and the reasons for the lack of good nursery habitat in the area. Gareth then described the work carried out and outlined the methods to be employed to assess the success of the work. Following the presentation there was a discussion about the length of time it would take to see improvements in the area, and the advantages/disadvantages of weed in the river and its management. Gareth Greer stated that checker board weed control would only be carried out where necessary and funding available. Donald Walker pointed out that a certain amount of weed is beneficial as it provides cover for fish. He

added that it may be up to 2 years before the river would recover and improvements would be seen. Gareth Greer agreed that it was difficult to say how long it would take for any improvements to be observed due to natural fluctuations within the river.

ACTION: Devina Park to include update on River Bush Habitat Restoration Project as recurring agenda item.

4. Regional Manager's update on notable pollution incidents and investigations since the last meeting.

Presentation from Conor Symington, Regional Manager, NIEA.

Conor Symington gave an update of local issues dealt with by NIEA Regional Operations since the last meeting, including a break down of the number, source and severity of water pollution incidents reported through the NIEA Water Pollution Hotline (0800 807060), and associated enforcement actions taken. He also provided information on some of the other work his team is involved in, including the processing of domestic consents, inspection of wastewater treatment works, industrial site visits, river monitoring and cross compliance farm visits. Robbie Marshall commented that DCAL used a formula for calculating reinstatement costs following a fish kill. He suggested that NIEA should develop a similar formula for reinstating river ecology following a pollution incident. Conor Symington stated that there is no mechanism for this in legislation, but that notices can be served. Claire Vincent suggested that this is a topic that should be raised at the Northern Ireland Water Framework Directive (WFD) Stakeholder Forum.

5. Update on the Development of the Bush Local Management Area (LMA) Action Plan and Arrangements for Work on the Glens and Rathlin LMA Action Plan

Devina Park gave an overview of the Bush Local Management Area Action Plan. There was a discussion about the number and location of river monitoring stations. Robbie Marshall asked if abstractions were modelled by NIEA, and about position with regard to heavily modified water bodies. Devina Park said that NIEA did use models to determine the impact of abstractions and that abstraction licences had a condition to enable reviews to be made. Claire Vincent said that although man-made structures did impact on some water quality elements, heavily modified water bodies still have to meet WFD standards for other parameters.

Martin McAleese asked about Forest Service practices within the LMA. Claire Vincent stated that Forest Service work with the Forest and Water Guidelines, and staff in the Bush and Glens area were aware of the requirements of the WFD.

Robbie Marshall said that a recent review of septic tanks in County Cavan and County Monaghan reported that approximately 30% of systems were not working properly and that water bodies were at risk from the cumulative effect of septic tank discharges. Claire Vincent said that AFBI are preparing a nutrient budget for the whole of NI and that this would help to attribute nutrients to specific sources such as small farms, unsewered properties etc. Uel Irwin said that we need to take other factors into account when tackling polluting discharges from septic tank systems. Many householders were not aware of the impacts or how to improve systems. In addition many systems are owned by elderly people or people with low incomes. Uel commented that it may be useful to look at alternative ways of improving septic tank discharges e.g. by use of natural reed beds. Claire Vincent said that it would be useful to bring these comments to the NI WFD as this is a Northern Ireland-wide issue. Michael Fell said that many of the water quality issues

we are now observing came from historical activities, for example, lead/line litter issues from fishing, and that measures would take time to have an effect.

Devina Park gave an example of an action to increase awareness of water quality issues within the agricultural sector – DARD and NIEA have published articles in the local farming press highlighting practical steps some farmers have to taken to improve water quality while maintaining profitability.

Devina Park said that NIEA planned to erect signs across the Bush Local Management Area advertising the pollution hotline number (0800 80 70 60). She asked for suggestions for locations. Donald Walker commented that this would be very useful and would encourage people to report water pollution. Robbie Marshall said that he would speak to local angling clubs about this. There was a discussion about the form of the signs and possible problems with fixing the signs.

Devina Park said that the action plan would be made available on the NIEA website. Robbie Marshall said that some people are not comfortable using the website and that he found it difficult to navigate. Devina Park asked for details to enable these issues to be addressed. Claire Vincent agreed that 1 hard copy of the Bush Action Plan would be sent to each angling club in the Bush and Glens CSG area.

ACTION: Robbie Marshall to provide feedback from angling groups about pollution hotline signs.

ACTION: Robbie Marshall to provide contact details for angling club secretaries.

ACTION: Devina Park to circulate the Bush Action Plan to angling club secretaries in the Bush and Glens CSG area.

6. Arrangements for work on the Glens and Rathlin LMA Action Plan

An action plan for the Glens and Rathlin LMA will be developed in 2011, and Devina Park will be working with stakeholders to identify issues. Various approaches were discussed and it was concluded that a combined approach, including a map workshop and meetings with individuals/interest groups.

7. AOB

Claire Vincent provided information on forming a River Trust and pointed out that these organisations have charitable status. Anyone interested in finding out more should contact Devina Park.

8. Close

Claire Vincent thanked all for attending and for their input.

Summary of actions from the meeting:

Ref	Action
3	Devina Park to include update on River Bush Habitat Restoration Project as recurring agenda item.
5.1	Robbie Marshall to provide feedback from angling groups about pollution hotline signs.
5.2	Robbie Marshall to provide contact details for angling club secretaries.
5.3	Devina Park to circulate the Bush Action Plan to angling club secretaries in the Bush and Glens CSG area.

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