

Minutes

5 May 2009

Venue: The Glens Hotel, Cushendall

Attendees:

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| 1. Claire Vincent | Head of Marine Assessment and Licensing Team, NIEA (Chair) |
| 2. Brian Luke | Regional Manager, NIEA (Presenter) |
| 3. Bridgeen Magorrian | River Basin Planning Team, NIEA (Presenter) |
| 4. Helen Nutt | North Eastern Catchment Officer, NIEA (Presenter & Note-taker) |
| 5. John Anderson | Friends of Larne Lough & CNCC |
| 6. Diane Arthur | River Basin Planning Team, NIEA |
| 7. Judith Bankhead | Rivers Agency |
| 8. Roy Carton | North Antrim Angling Association |
| 9. John Hill | Regional Manager, NIEA |
| 10. Brendan Kerr | Natural Living Assets & Ballycastle District Angling Club |
| 11. Tom Lavelle | Glens Angling Club / Ulster Angling Federation |
| 12. Larry McCann | Glens Angling Club |
| 13. Jim McCarlie | Friends of Larne Lough & East Antrim Boat Club |
| 14. Cara McCusker | Larne Borough Council & Moyle District Council |
| 15. Thomas Gregg McNabney | River Basin Planning Team, NIEA |
| 16. Alan Morrow | Countryside Management Branch, DARD |
| 17. Sharon Morrow | Friends of Larne Lough |
| 18. Helen Noble | Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust |
| 19. Jennifer Reeves | Sampler, NIEA |
| 20. Teddy Roughan | Inland Fisheries, DCAL |
| 21. Conor Symington | Water Quality Inspector, NIEA |
| 22. Donald Walker | North Antrim Angling Association |
| 23. Campbell Tweed | |

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.

- 1.1 Claire Vincent said that since the last meeting of the group the draft River Basin Management Plans (dRBMP) had been sent out for public consultation. She said that the focus of the meeting would be to look at the consultation questions listed in the dRBMP Consultation document and provide Bush and Glens Catchment Stakeholder Group (CSG) attendees at the meeting an opportunity to respond to this document. She said that there would also be the opportunity for taking information back to the various groups represented for further comment. Sheets were distributed with the questions printed and space for comments for those who wished to take the opportunity to make additional comments on the draft Plans. Claire Vincent emphasised that the consultation period would close on 22 June 2009.

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

Helen Nutt gave a brief update on the actions raised at the last meeting on 18 November 2008 in the Carnegie Museum & Arts Centre, Larne.

- 2.1 In relation to Action Point 2.2 from the last meeting: *Helen Nutt to contact Glens Angling Club representatives to ascertain whether or not amendments need to be made to the minutes of the last CSG*

meeting before posting on the Bush and Glens CSG website. Helen said that she had contacted the club members who had attended and that they had no changes. Sharon Morrow requested that a copy of the minutes of the last meeting be issued to the Friends of Larne Lough as she had not received a copy of them. Helen Nutt suggested that in the absence of any other amendments from Sharon Morrow that the minutes should be agreed and that she would add these to the CSG website.

ACTION: Helen Nutt to forward a copy of the minutes from the April 2008 Bush and Glens CSG meeting to Sharon Morrow for comment, make relevant amendments if required and add agreed minutes and presentations to the CSG website.

UPDATE: A copy of the minutes was issued to Sharon Morrow, a point was amended for accuracy and the Bush and Glens CSG website has now been updated with presentations from the Spring 2009 round of meetings.

[http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water-](http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/bush_and_glens.htm)

[home/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/bush_and_glens.htm](http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/bush_and_glens.htm)

2.2 In relation to Action Point 2.3 from the last meeting: *Helen Nutt to forward information on statutory and routine monitoring samples collected in the River Bush system to Mr Donald Walker.* Helen said that she had made this information available to all by the addition of an appendix added to the minutes of the last meeting.

3. **Regional Manager's update on notable pollution incidents and investigations since the last meeting. Presentation from Brian Luke, Regional Manager, NIEA.**

Brian Luke gave an update of local issues dealt with NIEA Regional Operations since the last meeting. He gave a break down of the number, source and severity of water pollution incidents reported through the NIEA Water Pollution Hotline (0800 807060). He highlighted the range of work that his team was involved in ranging from pollution investigation and prevention to Bathing Water sampling. He said that he and Helen Nutt had attended a number of Angling Club AGMs and that they would be willing to come along to any other meetings outside of the Catchment Stakeholder Group forum should people require.

3.1 Sharon Morrow asked for an update on the log of pollution incidents specifically associated with foam on Larne Lough.

ACTION: Helen Nutt to forward log of dates when foam had been reported to NIEA through the NIEA Water Pollution Hotline to Sharon Morrow for circulation to Friends of Larne Lough.

UPDATE: Helen Nutt has forwarded this information to Sharon Morrow.

3.2 Teddy Roughan highlighted his frustration at the levels of fines issued with regard to pollution incidents specifically in relation to the River Bush. A number of members of the group agreed with this frustration and John Anderson suggested that to promote the discrepancy in costs with regard to NIEA resources and actual fines that the total cost to the public purse is included in the press releases that NIEA issue at the culmination of their enforcement action. He said that such information should help to raise the awareness of magistrates and the judicial studies board on the environmental "cost" of pollution.

ACTION: Helen Nutt to relay the recommendation of the inclusion of the "cost to the public purse" in press releases regarding water pollution enforcement.

UPDATE: This recommendation has been relayed to the NIEA Regional Operations Enforcement Team for consideration.

3.3 Alan Morrow queried the issuing of advisory letters to identified polluters, in particular farmers. Brian Luke clarified that such letters merely stated that a pollution problem had been identified and that the farmer should put measures in place to prevent further pollution occurring. He said that specific advice on how to stop this happening was not given.

3.4 Roy Carton said that it would be useful for NIEA to present their mechanisms for investigation a pollution

problem at the next meeting. He said that this would help the meeting attendees to understand the steps that must be taken to take a case through to the enforcement stages.

ACTION: NIEA to highlight process and steps taken in bringing a pollution case to enforcement at a future meeting.

UPDATE: Regional Manager to present this process at the Autumn 2009 meeting.

3.5 John Anderson asked for an update on NIEA's investigations into Larne Lough and whether the monitoring buoy which had been placed there had shown up anything of note. Claire Vincent said that the constant monitoring buoy had been deployed before Christmas 2008 but that it had unfortunately been vandalised. She said that work was progressing and that NIEA would be happy to present an update on their work at the Environmental Management of Larne Lough forum if requested.

4. Draft River Basin Management Plans (dRBMP) Consultation – Introduction and scene setting. Presentation from Bridgeen Magorrian River Basin Planning Group, NIEA

Bridgeen Magorrian gave a presentation which was a brief overview of the process that had resulted in the publication of the draft plan. The current state of classification and the targets were outlined.

5. Group discussion focused on the dRBMP Consultation Questions.

After a short break the group looked at the six consultation questions which are detailed in the dRBMP Consultation Documents. The following questions were considered in relation to the North Eastern draft River Basin Management Plan, the document that relates to the Bush and Glens Catchment Stakeholder Group.

1. *Do you agree with the objectives and level of improvement set for Northern Ireland's water environment?*
2. *Have we identified the most significant pressures affecting the water environment?*
3. *Have we identified all the important existing measures that are being used to address these issues? Please identify any important existing measures that we have missed.*
4. *Can you identify new or existing measures or initiatives, at a regional or local level that you or your organisation can help deliver?*
5. *What suggestions do you have to improve the linkages this plan has with other relevant plans and programmes?*
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?*

5.1 It was explained that the outcome of these discussions would be presented to NIEA as a record of the Bush and Glens Catchment Stakeholder Group's response to the draft River Basin Management Plan Consultation.

ACTION: Helen Nutt to ensure that feedback to the dRBMP Consultation questions is recorded as an official response from the Bush and Glens Catchment Stakeholder Group and circulate to group attendees.

UPDATE: Feedback has been issued as an official response and summary of points raised have been circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

6. AOB

The group discussed ways of encouraging the attendance of farmers at meetings e.g. what would encourage them to come along. Not seen as likely to be easy to increase the numbers of farmers attending, even though they have been one of the industries that has invested most so far. The option of site visits as part of the CSG forum was considered as a positive move by the group.

6.1 It was agreed that a presentation on the priorities for tackling problems within the CSG area and on the ground implementation would be useful at the next meeting.

ACTION: A presentation on Catchment priorities to be proposed for the agenda of the next Bush and Glens CSG meeting.

UPDATE: A presentation on Local Management Area Plans will be given at the Autumn 2009 round of CSG meetings.

7. Close

Claire Vincent thanked all for attending and for their input to the discussion.

Summary of actions from the meeting:

Ref	Action	Update
2.1	Helen Nutt to forward a copy of the minutes from the April 2008 Bush and Glens CSG meeting to Sharon Morrow for comment, make relevant amendments if required and add agreed minutes and presentations to the CSG website.	A copy of the minutes was issued to Sharon Morrow, a point was amended for accuracy and the Bush and Glens CSG website has now been updated with presentations from the Spring 2009 round of meetings. http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water-home/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/bush_and_glens.htm
3.1	Helen Nutt to forward log of dates when foam had been reported to NIEA through the NIEA Water Pollution Hotline to Sharon Morrow for circulation to Friends of Larne Lough.	Helen Nutt has forwarded this information to Sharon Morrow.
3.2	Helen Nutt to relay the recommendation of the inclusion of the "cost to the public purse" in press releases regarding water pollution enforcement.	This recommendation has been relayed to the NIEA Regional Operations Enforcement Team for consideration.
3.4	NIEA to highlight process and steps taken in bringing a pollution case to enforcement at a future meeting.	Regional Manager to present this process at the Autumn 2009 meeting.
5.1	Helen Nutt to ensure that feedback to the dRBMP Consultation questions is recorded as an official response from the Bush and Glens Catchment Stakeholder Group and circulate to group attendees.	Feedback has been issued as an official response and summary of points raised have been circulated with the minutes of the meeting.
6.1	A presentation on Catchment priorities to be proposed for the agenda of the next Bush and Glens CSG meeting.	A presentation on Local Management Area Plans will be given at the Autumn 2009 round of CSG meetings.

Appendix

Bush and Glens Catchment Stakeholder Group Consultation response to the draft River Basin Management Plans.

The following questions were considered in relation to the North Eastern draft River Basin Management Plan. The responses to these questions have been collated as a record of the Bush and Glens Catchment Stakeholder Group's response to the draft River Basin Management Plan Consultation. These points were taken from discussions that were held by two breakout groups as part of the Bush and Glens Catchment Stakeholder Group meeting at the Glens Hotel, Cushendall on 5 May 2009.

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

- Level of ambition
- Difficult to answer without detail.
- Scope for very good waters in this area, more high quality waters possible.
- Target actions where improvements can be made.
- Should be aiming above bar – only desire waters to be as high as “good”, with no requirement for increase in number at “high” status. (Explanation of less stringent objectives was given).
- Are we just doing the bare minimum?
- To meet objectives will require quite significant changes, with potentially high costs. Better to set realistic targets (economic targets).
- Do we know enough about systems to know whether objectives are achievable? – tracking needed along the way.
- People will look to NIEA to know whether objectives are achievable. (Regional comparisons given) Northern Ireland's aspirations are very high.
- Got to be realistic with objectives and targets.
- Community will demand standards.
- Do regional variations reflect that there is one specific problem in Northern Ireland, which if it is resolved/ legislated against that many NI water will then be improved. (NI further ahead in some legislation e.g. NAP; new spend e.g. farm nutrient management and NIW infrastructure.
- Is it realistic to depend on a few measures?
- Nitrate vulnerable zones to Northern Ireland's advantage that we are “total territory”.
- Farm nutrient improvements will see rapid improvements/reductions in fish kills and pollution incidents.
- Education is improving river quality – farm improvements.
- Smolt and ecosystem problems still, so more communication and education needed.

- Number of statutory samples lifted needs to be emphasised.
- Social responsibility to report pollution
- There is a lot of work specifically with farmers.

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

- The human and “political factor” is over looked in this.
- (“Political factors” can prevent things from going ahead. – Political support needed – followed up in SEA question)
- Recession and resources needed, a lack of resources will affect most what can be done.
- The presence of the native invasive species sp. *Ranunculus pencilatus*, in the upper and mid section of the River Bush. Introduced in the 1960 to improve the population of certain fish, but its aim has backfired and the macrophyte’s growth is now out of control, swamping the River Bush spawning beds.
- Climate change considered separately, but its affects and potential affects not excluded.
- No specific coastal planning policy for Northern Ireland, therefore no (ICZM) Integrated Coastal Zone Management strategy here. – on too long of a finger.
- PPS 20 allows for the sewage discharge at low water mark only.
- (MHW) Medium high Waters – territorial waters planning (FEPA) Food and Environmental Protection Agency. UK Marine Bill. Need for local Northern Ireland Marine Bill expressed.
- PPS 21 expressed as having removed green belt. (ICZM) not in terrestrial – PPS’s – QS).
- Introduction of new legislation and policies are pressures in themselves.

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.

- Slieveanorra, protection areas ASSIs /SPA, has made access difficult for anglers in the Upper reaches of the Bush and the tributaries. Question in relation to how farmers are consulted in relation to Special Protection Areas. Other protected areas nearby, e.g. Breen Wood and Garry Bog. Need to ensure targets of different NIEA schemes do not contradict each other.
- Control of culverting is now primarily the responsibility of Planning Service. Amend planning to reflect.

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

- Educate school children, using data and local information from local rivers.
- Local initiatives e.g. PAIRS (Projects Aiming to Improve Aquatic Resources).
- Management body needed for Larne Lough and Dundrum Bay.
- Local community led initiatives to deal with problems.
- Lots of sub AONB led projects.
- People need to be well informed about what the critical issues are, so they can tackle the problems.
- Tidy Northern Ireland Projects.
- A lot already going on, just needs to be captured.

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

- Planning policies and plans.
- AONB management plans.
- ICZM Integrated Coastal Zone Management.
- ASSI/SAC/SPA Management Plans.
- EU landscape convention.
- Signpost linkages in our documentation helps. AONB plans have done this.
- Strategy layer of legislation from EU.
- Joined up and intelligent government needed.
- dRBMPs are really "capacity" study with pollution.
- SEA on planning policies not carried out – major impact.
- Can not see planning using dRBMPs in their work.
- Agriculture took it on in time with NAP.
- Important not to increase pollution load, especially not "planned pollution load.
- Illegal tipping in small wetlands (all come into RAMSAR, but not individually designated. Such tipping then receives retrospective planning permission.
- DOE - as planning and environmental regulation body – conflict of interest. (Kenya the only other country known to that stakeholder group member to have a similar system.) Planning will go to local councils again (good/bad more??).
- Invasive species and weeds, native and introduced. Hard calls. Who will pay for existing problems? – Research and interpretation needed.
- Never a look at entire assessed base – creeping development.
- Need to look more strategically at the whole of Northern Ireland.
- Is the Water Framework Directive really a priority for the government as a whole, for all departments? NIEA competent authority – sign up across government.
- Septic tanks PPS 21 difficult to roll back from cumulative problems. (new septic tank controls need to be tightened.)
- Local Biodiversity Action Programme (LBAP) tie in both directions.

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?

- Would be advantageous to arrange visits by people in local areas to see what a good quality river is like in comparison to a bad quality river.
- CSG days out with wider public involvement.
- Establish river trusts.
- The recent suggestion by the UK government of what is call the new green deal, raises the possibility of / facilitates getting people into work. Potential employment opportunities and training on river work.

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

- Move to new sewage treatment works from old ones. Old treatment works had no electricity and therefore less effective treatment. New works need electricity, which works well if power supply is constantly maintained. Power and therefore carbon demand from new treatment works.
- Are we inadvertently causing other problems?
- Any plan or programme – SEA has been carried out on dRBMP, not just negative, but also positive.
- Treatment of sewage sludge nutrients are now unavailable as a result of the way the sludge is treated and the sewage sludge regulations. This means that the land nutrients once provided from sludge will have to be obtained from elsewhere.
- Does the SEA forecast for changes? e.g. for pollution and scattered planning.
- Will the plan be costed? (This work is underway.)

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