

Minutes of Lower Neagh Bann Catchment Stakeholder Group Meeting 25 May 2010

The meeting was held at The Elk, Toomebridge, on Tuesday 25 May 2010 at 7.00pm.

Those present:

Conor Symington, NIEA, Water Management Unit
Gerry Wilson, NIEA, Water Management Unit
Alison McCaw, NIEA, Water Management Unit
Tom Simpson, Maine Angling Club
Judith Bankhead, Rivers Agency
Philip Maguire, Moyola Angling Club
Jack Chapman, Moyola Angling Club
Mark Livingstone (Chairman) – NIEA, Water Management Unit
Eileen Mallon, NIEA, Water Management Unit
Richard McFaul, NIEA, Water Management Unit
Edward Montgomery, Bann Systems Ltd
Brendan Kerr, Natural Living Assets
Rhonda Curry, NIEA, Water Management Unit
Teddy Roughan, DCAL, Inland Fisheries
Ruth Wilson, Antrim Borough Council
Alan Morrow, DARD, Countryside Management Branch
Kieran Tully, Agivey Anglers Association
Robert Cochrane, Ulster Farners Union
Richard Rowe, Clady & District Anglers
Dawson Wray,
Andrew Hitchenor, DRD, Roads Service
Norman Henderson, NIEA, Water Management Unit
Kieron Callaghan, NIEA, Water Management Unit

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mark Livingstone thanked everyone for attending the meeting and gave a brief outline of how the meeting would proceed. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate record. Mark introduced Gerry Wilson to the Group. Gerry is the new Catchment Management Officer for the Lower Neagh Bann CSG and any issues people have relating to pollution should be referred to Gerry rather than Eileen, who has moved to the Upper Neagh Bann CSG. It was explained that the 3 Catchment Officer Posts had now become 9 posts as NIEA moved to implement the River Basin Management Plans.

2. Actions from previous meeting – Gerry Wilson

Action 1: Stakeholders with concerns regarding intermittent pollution or other water management issues to contact EM.

This is an ongoing issue. Note that contact is now Gerry Wilson not Eileen Mallon.

Action 2: Details of NIEA pollution incident classification system and the assessment of impact to be presented at next meeting.

Conor Symington addressed this later on. A hand out detailing how pollution incidents are classified was available at the meeting and can also be found on our website.

www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water-home/waterpollution/pol_respon.htm

Action 3: Details of problems with the pollution hotline to be highlighted to NIEA and will be brought to the service provider's attention for feedback.

No issues have been raised with NIEA since the last meeting. Ongoing

Action 4: All NIEA staff reminded of the importance of providing timely feedback to stakeholders.

NIEA staff have been advised to provide feedback where appropriate.

Action 5: BL to follow up on specific pollution incident regarding potato and clipping dumping in river.

Completed. BL has met with and visited sites with Moyola anglers on a number of occasions.

Action 6: EM & BL to meet with Moyola anglers to log and address other issues.

Completed.

Action 7: Details of the distribution of zebra mussels to be provided by EM to TS and at the next meeting.

Information was e-mailed to TS 19.11.09

Zebra Mussels are present in Erne System, Lough Neagh, Carran Lough (Derrygonnelly) and unconfirmed report of presence in Lough Bresk (Co Fermanagh). The last 2 Loughs are unconnected. The spread of Zebra Mussels within Lough Neagh has been slower than might be expected from experience in Lough Erne.

First found in Lough Neagh in 07/08 when 9 mussels found, in 08/09 150 were found, in 09/10 220000 found. (68000 on one rowing boat which had not been anti-fouled) Hot spot is still around Kinnego marina. The Zebra Mussel management strategy can be found at www.ni-environment.gov.uk/zebramusselsreport_web.pdf

Action 8: All invited to contact EM with suggestions and comments on the LMA selection proposals.

Some comments have been received to date and the information leaflet is in the process of being amended accordingly

Action 9: All with comments/suggestions on how the CSGs can be improved to contact EM.

No comments had been passed to Eileen.

One issue was highlighted by representatives of Moyola Angling Club relating to a report that had been made of illegal dumping and had not apparently been addressed. The initial report was made in August 2009 and the location was Doon Road, Draperstown near the confluence of the Whitewater and the Moyola Rivers.

Action1- Eileen Mallon to find out what had happened in relation to this. (It had been referred to Waste Management)

3. Catchment Case study by Edward Montgomery- Bann Systems Limited.

Edward Montgomery gave a presentation to the group on the work carried out by Bann Systems Ltd. He began with a brief history of the fishery which goes back to Pre-Plantation times and ownership of the fishery passed to the Honourable The Irish Society in 1613. A commercial fishery operated from the 17th to 20th Century. The fishery closed in 1995 due to disease and decline in numbers. Commercial netting rights were bought by the Government in 2001.

The creation of the Bann Navigation caused great damage to spawning grounds and angling waters and angling only became possible below weirs. Bann System Limited was created in 1980's to manage fishing and river interests. Tributary Rivers, Rhee, Agivey, Ballymoney, Clady, Moyola and Ballinderry, are leased to Angling Clubs

Fishery Development work has been carried out as follows;

- Improvement of spawning and nursery habitat
- Imposition of bagging limits on anglers
- Encouragement of Catch and release scheme
- Support for Scientific Research.

Habitat improvement was carried out in 12 small tributary rivers following funding being secured from DARD in 2005. This consisted of obstacle removal, gravel insertion and the creation of artificial spawning and nursery stretches. This has resulted in an increase in Salmon and Trout presence, but more work is needed. Bann Systems operates as a Charitable Organisation and distributes any profits to deserving causes, although some money is retained for fishery development and educational work. Two examples quoted "Hatchery in the Classroom" which involved 15 Schools at a cost of around 10k per year, and "Bann Start" teaching young people to angle.

Group Discussion

A point was made that NIEA, DCAL and Bann Systems should all be able to work together to improve the fish stocks in the rivers. It was agreed that the main problem seems to be the amount of fish being "lost" at sea and not returning to spawn. The work of Richard Kennedy in the genetic fingerprinting of stock was also highlighted.

4. Operational Actions - Conor Symington, NIEA Regional Manager.

Conor Symington gave a presentation to the group on the range of work carried out by staff in the area, in relation to pollution incidents, prevention and progress made. During the period October 2009 to May 2010 there were 115 incidents reported to the Water Pollution Hotline. Of these, 59 were able to be substantiated and no pollution could be found at the remaining 56. 52 incidents were classed as low severity and the remaining 7 were Medium Severity. (Medium Severity incidents or worse are cost recoverable). 24 incidents were Sewage related and 14 were Oil related. Of the 7 Medium severity incidents, statutory samples were taken in 3 in cases.

Other incidents of note:- in February 2010 900000 litres of slurry were lost from an overground slurry storage. Prompt action by the farmer prevented damage to the watercourse and no significant impacts were recorded.

Question asked about water bailiffs helping in pollution investigations by taking samples.

Answer: Norman Henderson replied that the issue had been raised before and was actively being worked on.

ACTION 2 – Norman Henderson to continue to explore this possibility.

5. Local Management Area Overview and Workshop on Lough Neagh LMA – Alison McCaw, NIEA.

Alison gave a brief overview of the process to date and invited those present to identify any issues they were aware of in the LMA that were causing problems. There were large scale maps available for identifying any issues and those present were invited to highlight any issues where possible.

Issues highlighted include

1. Floating Pennywort on Sixmilewater. Risk it may enter the Lough
2. Query about fish passage on weir on Crumlin River.
3. Query about Castledawson WWTW. Alleged it was continually running "bad"
4. Query regarding Macrophyte classification on Crumlin River Upper.

ACTION 3 – Conor Symington to follow up regarding the complaint about Castledawson WWTW.

6. Conclusion

Mark Livingstone concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and stated copies of the minutes and action points would be circulated. Individuals would be contacted in relation to action points.

The meeting concluded and the date of the next meeting will be circulated at a later date.