

# Minutes

21 April 2009

## Venue: Mount Stewart, Newtownards

### Attendees:

- |     |                    |   |
|-----|--------------------|---|
| 1.  | Claire Vincent     | Acting Head Water Management Unit, NIEA (Chair)                         |
| 2.  | Wesley Rowley      | Regional Manager, NIEA (Presenter)                                      |
| 3.  | Alison McCaw       | River Basin Planning Group, NIEA (Presenter)                            |
| 4.  | Gerry Wilson       | River Basin Planning Group, NIEA (Note-taker)                           |
| 5.  | Bridgeen Magorrian | River Basin Planning, NIEA  |
| 6.  | Tony Morgan        | Water Quality Inspector, NIEA   |
| 7.  | Kevin McGrady      | Regional Operations, NIEA   |
| 8.  | Judith Bankhead    | Rivers Agency   |
| 9.  | Connor Mallon      | Rivers Agency   |
| 10. | James Brown        | Ulster Farmers Union  |
| 11. | George Butler      | Northern Ireland Water  |
| 12. | Paul Byers         | Northern Ireland Water  |
| 13. | James Kennedy      | Sandycove Holiday Homes   |
| 14. | JJ Kennedy         | Sandycove Holiday Homes & Armagh & Down<br>Regional Tourism Partnership |
| 15. | Philip McMurray    | Planning and Environmental Policy Group, DOE                            |

### Apologies:

- |    |                |   |
|----|----------------|---|
| 1. | Helen Nutt     | North Eastern Catchment Officer, NIEA               |
| 2. | Kevin McGlynn  | Water Quality Inspector, NIEA                       |
| 3. | Brian Black    | Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside |
| 4. | Seamus Connor  | Fisheries Conservancy Board                         |
| 5. | Billy Watson   | Dibney River Trust                                  |
| 6. | John Peacocke  | Lecale Conservation Society                         |
| 7. | Ann McCullough | Development Plan Team, Planning Service             |
| 8. | Jim Hayes      | Inland Fisheries, DCAL                              |

### 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 Strangford and Lecale 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.**

***Presentation from Claire Vincent, Acting Head Water Management Unit, NIEA; "Update on action points from the last meeting"***

Claire Vincent gave a brief presentation highlighting updates on the actions raised at the last meeting on 4 November 2008 in the Bridge Community Centre, Killyleagh.

- 2.1 In relation to Action Point 2.1 from the last meeting: *Helen Nutt to add agreed minutes and past presentations from CSG meetings to new Strangford and Lecale CSG website.* The Strangford and Lecale CSG website has been updated with presentations from the Autumn 2008 round of meetings.

[http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water/wfd/public\\_partic\\_3/catchment\\_stakeholder\\_group/sstrangford\\_and\\_lecale.htm](http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_group/sstrangford_and_lecale.htm)

- 2.2 Attendees at the meeting were asked for any further feedback on the minutes that had been distributed to the attendees and corresponding members of the group following the last meeting. One correction was noted; that JJ Kennedy represented the Armagh & Down Regional Tourism Partnership. The group agreed that in the absence of any further amendments to the minutes that they would be agreed and posted on the Strangford and Lecale Catchment Stakeholder Group (CSG) website. Claire Vincent asked for feedback on the new look website.

**ACTION: Helen Nutt to add agreed minutes and past presentations to the Strangford and Lecale CSG website.**

[http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water/wfd/public\\_partic\\_3/catchment\\_stakeholder\\_group/sstrangford\\_and\\_lecale.htm](http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_group/sstrangford_and_lecale.htm)

- 2.3 In relation to Action Point 4.10 from the last meeting: *Parties interested in being involved in the proposed Quoile Catchment Working Group to contact Helen Nutt with name of nominated representative.* Names of representatives have been sent to Helen from interested parties. Interdepartmental pre-meeting was held on 6 March 2009. 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of Quoile Catchment Working Group was held on 10 March 2009. Draft minutes of this meeting have been circulated to the Working Group members who are looking at how to put the ideas into an action plan. Claire Vincent gave a brief overview of some items that were being considered. Draft minutes of the Quoile Catchment Working Group meeting were available at the meeting.

- 2.4 Claire Vincent said that the Environment Agency in England had a "Fish Rescue Service" which consisted of large holding tanks which could be used in the event of the watercourse being de-oxygenated. Fish ladders were provided to enable the fish to be easily moved into these tanks when they were required. She said that straw bales were used in the pond at Mount Stewart to dissuade algal growth and that similar methods could be used in the Quoile. Claire Vincent said that some additional monitoring work had started on the Quoile and that a bathymetric survey had been carried out by NIEA. A hand-out giving a graphical interpretation of results of the bathymetry survey was distributed to the meeting attendees. The survey showed a number of deep pools and indicated a possibly reason as to why the bottom layer had been so severely de-oxygenated in summer.
- 2.5 In relation to Action Point 5.3 from the last meeting: *Helen Nutt to look into research that has been carried out on the effects of female contraceptives in the aquatic environment.* Helen Nutt has produced a short paper pulling together information on Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals in the Aquatic Environment. Copies of the paper were available at the meeting.
- 2.6 In relation to Action Point 8.2 from the last meeting: *Helen Nutt to approach NIEA colleagues for presentations on coastal erosion and shellfish waters designations at future meetings.* This has been done and there is a willingness by NIEA staff to give presentations on these topics.

### 3. **Update on Quoile Catchment management**

This was covered, as under section 2.3 and 2.4 of these minutes, by Claire Vincent in relation to comments about the new Quoile Catchment Working Group.

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

#### ***Presentation from Wesley Rowley, Regional Manager, NIEA.***

Wesley Rowley gave a presentation on the incidents recorded between the period 1 November 2008 and 8 April 2009. There were a total of 95 reported incidents. In 39 of these reported incidents no pollution could be found by the investigating officer. There were 56 confirmed pollution incidents of which 46 were considered to be of low severity and 10 of medium severity.

- 4.1 There are currently 11 cases being considered for enforcement action. The additional case, although of low severity, is due to repeated incidents from the same offender. Two specific incidents were cited as follows

- 1) An algal bloom in Dairy Lough Ballynahinch
- 2) A sunken trawler in Donaghadee Harbour.

Wesley Rowley said that there is currently 1 court case pending due to repeated adjournments. He said that this case has been deferred to mid May 2009.

The floor was opened for comments or questions.

- 4.2 James Kennedy asked if things were improving or not. Wesley said that generally things were getting better and that a lot of the reported incidents were a result of disputes between neighbours. Claire Vincent drew everyone's attention to the Pollution Hotline number (0800 807060) and stated that any reported pollution was investigated by Wesley and his team. She said that Kevin McGrady worked in the Regional Operations Team and co-ordinated proceedings from Headquarters in Lisburn.

**5. Draft River Basin Management Plans (dRBMP) Consultation – Introduction and scene setting.**

***Presentation from Alison McCaw River Basin Planning Group, NIEA***

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

**6. 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 Strangford and Lecale 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?*

- 6.1 The outcome of these discussions has been recorded in the attached Appendix. This has been presented to NIEA as a record of the Strangford and Lecale 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 Strangford and Lecale Catchment Stakeholder Group.**

## 7. AOB

Claire Vincent stated that NIEA did not want to dominate the CSG and that following the previous meeting there had been a suggestion that there should be an independent chair of the Group. It had been agreed that anyone interested in taking on this role should pass their name to Helen Nutt. To date only one name had been informally received indicating an interest in this role. It was noted that none of those present thought there should be any change to the current arrangements.

**ACTION: Names for consideration for the role of independent chair of the Group to be passed to Helen Nutt for consideration by the Group.**

7.1 Claire Vincent said that NIEA were willing to host outside speakers and that as had previous been noted there had been a number of suggestions for topics to be covered at future meetings. Further suggestions for topics at the next meeting included;

- a talk from Rivers Agency about coastal defences
- the possibility of looking at a prioritisation matrix to produce "quick fixes" in the catchment
- a summary presentation from the Quoile Catchment Working Group

## 8. Close

Claire Vincent thanked all for attending and for their input to the discussion. She recorded a special thanks to Helen Nutt for having organised the meeting and leaving good notes to ensure the meeting ran smoothly in her absence.

### Summary of actions from the meeting:

Ref	Action	Update
2.2	Helen Nutt to add agreed minutes and past presentations to the Strangford and Lecale CSG website.	Strangford and Lecale CSG website has been updated with agreed minutes from Autumn 2008 meeting and presentations from Spring 2009. <a href="http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/strangford_and_lecale.htm">http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water/wfd/public_partic_3/catchment_stakeholder_groups/strangford_and_lecale.htm</a>
6.1	Helen Nutt to ensure that feedback to the dRBMP Consultation questions is recorded as an official response from the Strangford and Lecale Catchment Stakeholder Group.	
7	Names for consideration for the role of independent chair of the Group to be passed to Helen Nutt for consideration by the Group.	

# Appendix

## Strangford and Lecale 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 Strangford and Lecale Catchment Stakeholder Group's response to the draft River Basin Management Plan Consultation. These points were taken from the discussions that were held as part of the Strangford and Lecale Catchment Stakeholder Group meeting at Mount Stewart, Newtownards on Tuesday 21 April 2009.

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

- Mixed views; target of 100% of water bodies at Good Ecological Status (GES) by 2027 is not realistic.
- Funding to meet this target is an issue.
- Overall level of improvement for 2015 seems reasonable however the targets for 2021 will be more difficult to achieve.
- Less ambitious target may be more achievable for 2015.
- What are the main reasons for less than good? (NIEA draft River Basin Management Plans web maps give detailed information.)
- "100%" good by 2027 – unrealistic in real world. Even with close to 90 or 95% of water bodies achieving good we'd be doing very well. Positive and to be encouraged that there is an aim 'to achieve'. Less ambitious target may be more achievable for 2015. 2008-2015, likely to see a big improvement, doubts that the environment will respond that quickly.
- In grounds where clover grows it may show elevated nitrogen in closed period as it is a naturally occurring nitrogen fixing plant, we will need better science to understand.
- Funding of new measures, solution may not be possible.
- Funding of Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTWs) – uncertainty, concern. 2015 – 2021 pay off debts or invest in the future.
- Consider 'quick wins' in classification, harder after that. Is it achievable? Last few disproportionately expensive versus other funding pressures eg health.
- Northern Ireland Water (NIW) capital works programme.
- NIW, Rural Waste water, help and target/prioritisation. Targeting 20 small WWTWs. Local expertise may help identify one element to target to get a 'quick win'.
- Set lower objectives? – maybe meet targets rather than fail. Republic of Ireland (ROI) is very ambitious but hit by funding implications and nitrates non-compliance issue.
- Classification 'quick wins' – what is dragging below – tougher between 58-96%. Clear 'quick wins', big second point. Aim for 100% but last few % disproportionately expensive – Great Britain (GB) 80-90% more likely.
- NI more rural / farming based than rest of UK
- Heavily Modified Water Bodies (HMWBs) – confusion on page 16 of draft River Basin Management Plan (dRBMP) understanding concept. Name HMWB but then

go on to define rivers. Quoile – HMWB

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

- Issue-septic tanks. Rural septic tanks, lumped with agriculture, why the change as this was not the case previously, should be seen separately.
- Not enough emphasis on urban development – hard engineering impacts water quantity issues.
- Climate change impacts need to be included.
- Include tourism in the marine morphology section.
- Concern – urban development effects on water quality and effects downstream. Increased run-off, morphological effect downstream. Not considered adequately.
- Climate change implications and intensity of rainfall.
- Temperature effect on fish (salmon). Hard to define how this will affect with climate change.
- Storm surges etc – areas we need to look at.
- Marine morphology section 5.9 of draft River Basin Management Plan- include tourism.
- Sustainable development and tourism – developing tourism as a driver for the economy. Integrating this into the environment sustainably.

**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.**

- Abstraction and flow – ok.
- Include reference to Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) – important part of flood control.
- Agriculture – increase in Countryside Management Scheme (CMS).
- Private septic tanks need to be included. Enforcement of Water Order should be listed as a measure.
- Managing misconnections to be included.
- Make sure all measures are included in the summary tables.
- Illegal dumping e.g. fuel laundering, which affects water bodies (NIEA Environment Crime Unit).
- Drainage Order to be considered with Marine Morphology.
- Expand content on Food and Environmental Protection Act (FEPA).
- Movement of shellfish – not included as Alien Species pressure.
- We don't have all the answers. Programmes of Measures (POMs) identifies others as responsible organisations/sectors and supporters. See summary table POMs in draft River Basin Management Plan.
- 5.1 Include SUDS and cross reference to Urban Development sector.
- 5.2 Derogated farm issue - low numbers. Derogation farms have more efficient use of nitrogen. Farmers discouraged from applying for derogation (complicated delivery of derogation message from DARD). Farmers need to be very pro-active. Isn't enough push on derogation within DARD.
- Government should make applications for funding more accessible.
- 5.3 NIW lead. Rural villages with no treatment works will be considered as part of prioritisation. Collection and treatment of sewage, rural waste water management scheme e.g. Millbay, Island Magee and Ballywalter.

- Sullage water / grey water / misconnections, Water UK – NIEA to develop guidance on misconnections.
- Forestry – not a big issue for this catchment.
- Industry – general policy to prefer discharges to sewer rather than water courses. General policy to go to sewer rather than watercourses.
- Web linking in Programmes of Measures (POM) improved/cross referencing.
- Include private septic tank issue, no NIW plans for NIW to take on. See 5.3.6c of draft River Basin Management Plans.
- Role of NIEA enforcement for private Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTWs)
- New action – review- include in summary table of POM.
- 5.4 Water UK reference document dealing with pollution surface waters. Make better reference to it in new action – summary table ‘guidelines’.
- 5.6 Education needed.
- 5.7 Illegal element – Illegal dumping, diesel laundering, - police involvement regarding environmental crime, more detail in dRBMPs.
- 5.8 Need review of legislation – not there yet – Ref 5.8.5.b
- 5.9 The Drainage Order applies currently to freshwater environment but should be considered for the marine environment also. Add in drainage NI Drainage Land Order as per fresh water, marine morphology (sea defences) include in table 94.
- Querying how to regulate morphology in marine – is it enough? Answer – Food and Environmental Protection Act (FEPA) more joined up – page 90. Also text should include reference to FEPA being 1 stop shop i.e. includes Fisheries, Habitats etc. Mechanism for marine, so not as piecemeal as fresh water. Need to list all the different things this licensing system does, give more information on what this involves.
- 5.10 Controls of fisheries division from marine perspective. Controls on fisheries – movement licenses (Article 13) Include fisheries movement of shellfish etc.
- General point - Summary table cross-referenced to other POMs and not just key legislative measures. Maybe in summary, have existing and new measures.

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

- Include Tidy NI, Green Beach, Blue Flag.
- Lack of blue flag status beaches, not enough in NI. Conflict between what you have to do. Blue flag vs Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs).
- ASSI and Bathing Waters Regulations appear to conflict with each other.
- Tidy NI - ongoing work, council role. Greencastle – Bathing Water quality information only. Councils apply for those awards. Millisle got awards this year. Encourage Ards Borough Council to apply.
- Tourism stakeholders have role e.g. litter control as part of good management practise, not allowing motorbikes on beaches/dogs running about/litter. Possibility of including such Council and stakeholder led measures in Projects Aiming to Improve aquatic ReSources (PAIRs). Wider environment practise.
- Biggest stumbling block – educating and knowledge of environment to customers. Encourage them to spot Brent Geese, develop communication tools. Green Coast initiative, education of caravan customers.
- UK Trade Association for Parks, David Bellamy biodiversity award has been very successful. Northern Ireland Water (NIW) ‘Bag it and Bin it’ campaign on beaches. Managing 900 dwellings.

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

- Observation – some plans compete with each other, balancing all of this.
- Tourism – Plans.
- New ways of working – setting up small groups to tackle better ways of working together.
- Construction, industry – get them more involved Quarry Products Association (QPA) are engaged at a NI national level.
- Improvement of small sewage works, package plants, electricity, electricity demand, improving water environment.
- Costs of implementation
- Nitrates Action Plan already integrated.
- p.114 – Tourism feedback needed.
  - Wastewater not included in list.

**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?**

- Quoile Catchment Working Group is an effective way of looking at the key issues.
- Possibility of involving construction reps – active in National Stakeholder Group.

**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?**

- Attempts to improve water environment may transfer 'problems' to other parts of the environment eg air, built environment. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) considers that new Water Framework Directive (WFD) measures will not have a negative effect on the wider environment.
- Eg Improvement of small sewage works, old kit etc
- Concern improvement may need electricity so may be improving water but if electric failure then maybe no treatment at all where as before at least some (poor) treatment.
- Eg Marine turbine vs marine mammals.
- Eg. Germans successfully reduce water use (wise use) but now not enough water through system to 'clean' it so therefore more disinfectant, power etc.
- What can we afford?
- Water charges – how much are people willing to pay?

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