

Minutes of 14th Meeting

Northern Ireland Water Framework Directive Stakeholder Forum

River House, Belfast

16th December 2008

Attendance:

Paul Simpson	DOE - chairperson
Peter Archdale	Upper Foyle CSG
Alan Barr	RPS consultants
Gordon Best	Quarry Products Association
William Caldwell	DOE (PEPG)
Brenda Cunning	DOE (PEPG)
Joanne Gaffney	Aquaculture Initiative
Uel Irwin	AES Kilroot
David Knott	Port of Belfast
Aileen Lawson	Ulster Farmers Union
Linda McGoldrick	DARD
Philip McMurray	DOE (PEPG)
Robbie Marshall	Fresh Water Taskforce (UAF)
John Martin	Freshwater Taskforce (RSPB)
Gabriel Nelson	DOE (NIEA)
Trevor Wright	Port of Larne (& British Ports Assoc)

Apologies:

George Alexander	NI Water
Michael Bell	NI Food & Drink Association
Sèan Convery	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
Brian Ervine	DARD
Brian Murphy	CNCC
Jenny Robinson	General Consumer Council NI
Julian Smyth	DRD Water Policy Unit

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the 13th meeting on 16th September 2008 were approved.

2. Matters arising from minutes & updates paper

No matters arising and no comments on updates paper.

3. Draft River Basin Management Plans – Demo

Gabriel Nelson (GN) gave a short presentation on the layers of information available online as part of the draft River Basin Management Plans. He explained that information boxes within the “Tier 2” section of the RBMP (the draft plan summary document) would point to further information on the website, and that web-based mapping and search options could

be used to identify specific areas, and associated status and objective information. In response to a question about cross-border water-bodies, he said that "Tier 1" of the RBMP (Working Together document) provided a summary of the whole IRBD and specific information on the cross-border water-bodies. The intention would be to create a seamless tool in the future, for the whole IRBD, based on stable GIS platforms in both jurisdictions.

GN highlighted that the river basin districts had been broken down into 27 local management areas, and that the website would contain information on each of these local areas.

Members of the Forum gave helpful feedback on the layout of the web-based tools and GN said that further comments would be very welcome, as part of the consultation process. Peter Archdale (PA) stressed that online access could be difficult for some. However, it was recognised that the information was best viewed online, as interactive content, rather than as static maps within a large publication.

Discussion followed on linkages with the TELLUS project (e.g. regarding mineral content in soil), the investigation of causes for elevated metal levels, the need for transparency and prioritisation of monitoring, and the need for preventative action, targeted at smaller businesses.

GN again emphasised that comments will be very welcome during the 6 months consultation, beginning on 22 December 2008.

4. Strategic Environmental Assessment – Update

Alan Barr (AB) gave a brief presentation, updating the Forum on the Strategic Environmental Assessment process, which has been running in parallel to development of the draft RBMPs. This process also includes a Habitats Directive Assessment. The assessment reports will be published on 22 December to coincide with publication of the draft RBMPs, and will be followed by a report on comments received in July-August 2009 and a final SEA statement in December 2009.

5. Participation 2009

5.1 GN outlined several activities to highlight the publication of the draft RBMPs on 22 December, and the subsequent six month consultation. NIEA would write to key stakeholders on 19 December, followed by press notices in 3 main newspapers on 23 and 30 December. A possible Ministerial event on 22 January would be used to encourage responses and begin awareness-raising on series of information days to be held in CSG areas from March to May.

The exact format of the information days would be worked out, in conjunction with CSG chairs, but could involve discussions, website demonstrations and interactive displays. In response to questions and suggestions from Forum members, GN agreed to look at additional methods for promoting the draft plans.

Action: Gabriel Nelson to consider trade events (e.g. Balmoral Show), country fairs and other events as opportunities to publicise draft RBMPs.

Action: Linda McGoldrick to provide details of agricultural contractors trade association.

5.2 Philip McMurray advised the Forum of an upcoming European Water Conference (Brussels 2-3 April 2009), which would focus on participation and initial feedback on the draft plans and the WFD process. He explained that PEPG would look into the possibility of stakeholders in NI contributing to this conference online.

GN told the Forum of a CIWEM conference being held in London (11 February 2009), which would seek stakeholder perspectives. John Martin said that he might be going on behalf of RSPB, and agreed to discuss with Freshwater Taskforce associates.

6. Catchment Stakeholder Group Feedback

Peter Archdale gave the Forum some brief feedback on the CSGs and his role as chairperson. Key points were:

- Resourcing issues and how many meetings could be held per year. PA explained that 2 meetings were not enough and that he was trying to form working groups in the Upper Foyle CSG to work on issues ahead of each CSG meeting.
- Role of CSG in terms of knowledge and buy-in, especially with regards transparency and prioritisation of improvements.
- Northern Ireland Water's timescale for improvement of treatment works against the required prioritisation of remedial action should be looked at by the Inter-departmental Board.
- While the new abstraction and impoundment licensing was welcomed, need for a transparent process, and not just lip-service to consultation.

7. AOB and Date of next meeting

PA asked for a progress report on the septic tank project.

Action: Gabriel Nelson to email an update to Peter Archdale.

It was proposed that the next meeting take place on Tuesday 3rd March 2009.