

Minutes of 8th Meeting

Northern Ireland Water Framework Directive Stakeholder Forum

River House, Belfast

23rd May 2007

Attendance: Forum Members

Paul Simpson	DOE – Chairperson
William Caldwell	DOE (PEPG)
Andrew Frazer	Harperstown Power Ltd
Joanne Gaffney	Aquaculture Initiative
Clifford Henry	DOE (EHS)
Uel Irwin	AES Kilroot
Alex McGarel	Fresh Water Taskforce (WWF)
Philip McMurray	DOE (PEPG)
Ian Morrow	NI Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Cate Murphy	DOE (EHS)
Garry O'Neill	DCAL Fisheries

Secretariat: Brenda Cuning DOE (PEPG)

Apologies:

Michael Bell	NI Food & Drink Association
Gordon Best	Quarry Products Association
Sèan Convery	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
Dick James	NI Fish Producers Organisation Ltd
Fergal Kearney	NI Tourist Board
Aileen Lawson	Ulster Farmers Union
Robbie Marshall	Fresh Water Taskforce (UAF)
Karen McCambley	NILGA
Ian McKee	DARD
John Mills	DRD Water Policy Division
Brian Murphy	CNCC
Alex Scullin	NI Agricultural Producers Association
Andrew Sloan	NI Sports Council
Graham Smith	General Consumer Council NI
Trevor Wright	Port of Larne

Observers:

Stephen Cunningham	QUB Gibson Institute
Simon McCullough	QUB Gibson Institute

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting & matters arising

The minutes of the 7th meeting on 21 February 2007 were approved without amendment, and there were no matters arising (all issues carried forward through agenda or actions).

2. WFD Updates

The latest WFD updates paper had been circulated prior to the meeting. Paul Simpson (PS) highlighted that the Implementation Working Group meeting scheduled for 11 May had been postponed until mid-June, and that technical review of 'phase 2' of the environmental standards would be issued by UKTAG in June. Members of the Forum asked to be advised when the technical review opened.

Action: Brenda Cunning to advise Forum members when UKTAG technical review of phase 2 standards begins

Alex McGarel (AMcG) enquired about the 'new economics group'. Clifford Henry (CH) replied that the Implementation Working Group had agreed to form a sub-group to look at programmes of measures and economic implications (the POMs Sub-Group). AMcG explained that she was concerned with how stakeholders could influence economic decisions, and was worried that decisions could be made behind closed doors. Philip McMurray (PMcM) said that decisions on measures, less stringent objectives or extended deadlines would have to be justified within the River Basin Management Plans, the draft version of which would be available for public comment in 2008.

Discussion then focused on how the costs of existing measures would be taken into account under WFD, emphasising that costs associated with other Directives could not be considered as costs for WFD implementation. CH said that the effectiveness of the implementation of existing Directives, and the associated costs, were being considered to evaluate the 'gap' to be addressed by WFD measures. He said there was a need for the Collaborative Research Programme work to be looked at on a local level in Northern Ireland.

Joanne Gaffney (JG) raised the issue of shellfish waters designations, stating that all existing shellfish licensed sites should be designated as shellfish waters, followed by water improvement plans. She said that 75% of sites in Northern Ireland had not yet been designated, and that in September 2002 DARD had issued a moratorium on licensing of new sites. Uel Irwin (UI) pointed out the difficulties with shellfish operations in Belfast Lough.

Andrew Frazer advised the Forum that he had been in contact with Peter Close (EHS Water Management Unit) regarding the application form for an abstraction / impoundment license, and that he thought the application form was directed towards drinking water abstraction. JG confirmed that aquaculture members felt the same, and that there were too many consultations. UI said that AES Kilroot had applied for a license, as had Premier Power and ESB, and that EHS had indicated there would be no response for several months.

3. Significant Water Management Issues

CH told the Forum that, following on from her presentation on the SWMI report at the previous meeting, Grace Glasgow from RPS had received comments or queries from several Forum members. He said that work was on target for 22 June publication, which would be online and by hard-copy, and asked the Forum to consider how maximum

distribution of the publication could be achieved. He pointed out that leaflets were being printed, to be distributed through countryside centres, libraries etc. Cate Murphy (CM) (catriona.murphy@doeni.gov.uk) would be the contact point for SWMI comments / queries for Northern Ireland.

AF queried whether the SWMI publication, as a booklet, would encourage people to send in comments, when consultations had a low response rate (e.g. abstraction consultation). William Caldwell (WC) highlighted that the SWMI publications were targeted for a more general audience, and that evening meetings of the Catchment Stakeholder Groups could be used to engage and get feedback on the documents. It was agreed that the SWMI publication needed to be seen as part of an open process, not as a consultation paper, and that return feedback was very important (e.g. show views taken into account, actions taken as a result of comments etc.).

AF asked if non-consumptive abstraction was considered a significant issue, as such activities were now being regulated. CH replied that it was similar to regulation of discharges. JG said that risk was an issue. She asked how the decisions on risk were being made, and what was the methodology used. CH replied that 'characterisation' was ongoing, with the Article 5 risk assessment being an interim report. The methodology was open and available, was based on UKTAG work and was used in UK and Ireland.

EHS webpage on risk assessment:

http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/water/wfd/characterisation/techreports/pressures_impacts.htm

CIS Guidance on Analysis of Pressures and Impacts:

http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?l=/framework_directive/guidance_documents/guidancesnos3spressuress/ EN 1.0 &a=d

4. Public Participation

Alex McGarel gave a presentation on the events held by Freshwater Taskforce to mark World Wetlands Day. She also circulated papers which summarised the activities and FWTF proposals. In conjunction with Sustainable Water Network Ireland (SWAN), FWTF organised a World Wetlands Day tour of the border regions, starting in Carlingford and finishing in Derry. Activities included dressing as wetlands creatures to engage with school children, conducting a questionnaire, holding focus group meetings with farming, angling and tourism representatives and a final meeting in Loughs Agency headquarters with stakeholders and regulators to discuss the outcomes.

FWTF concluded that an all-island approach to public participation was required (in line with technical implementation), taking the opportunity to add into the review of North-South structures; that awareness of water issues needed to be raised; that water issues needed to be high on the political agenda; and that NGO experience should be used.

PS asked if SWAN would be making similar proposals to the Department of Heritage, Environment and Local Government (DEHLG) in Ireland, and whether it was being proposed that a working group be set-up between the two governments and eNGOs. AMcG said that the proposals had already been submitted. She made reference to the HamoniCOP Handbook as a source of information on improving public participation in river basin management planning.

<http://www.harmonicop.uos.de/HarmonicOPHandbook.pdf>

Discussion followed on whether a national strategy could deliver local actions, on the need for raising awareness of the connection between everyday water uses and the condition of rivers, lakes etc., and on the possibility of the NS SHARE project being extended in 2008, and taking forward more public participation activities. It was noted that the NS SHARE area did not cover the whole of Ireland, and would not therefore meet the expectations of SWAN.

PS said that he would raise this as a North-South issue with the Minister and establish her views on the proposal.

5. Stakeholder Event Sept / Oct 2007

William Caldwell (WC) asked the Forum to consider the format of this year's WFD stakeholder event, which would follow on from 3 previous annual events. He explained that current thinking was to have evening events, centred on the SWMI reports. During discussion, Forum members requested an update on the Catchment Stakeholder Groups and emphasised that membership of the CSGs should be as open as possible.

Action: Clifford Henry to provide update on CSGs, including dates of future meetings.

Several suggestions were made for the 2007 event, including - the need to widen appeal of the event, to encourage more than the 'usual suspects' to take part; the possibility of a schools competition, based on posters or an environmental project; involvement of retailers or large companies, to showcase their environmental work; and use of questionnaires at the event or as a follow-up activity.

It was agreed that a special meeting should be arranged to discuss ideas for the 2007 event in more detail.

Action: Brenda Cuning to arrange special meeting for event planning.

6. Work Programme

Clifford Henry spoke briefly about the work programme for the draft river basin management plan, which Water Management Unit has compiled on an internal basis. Input from other departments and agencies would be sought through the Implementation Working Group, to include an indication of completion dates for activities etc. The Forum was asked to input details of events being held in the next 18 months.

Action: Forum members to supply details of upcoming events for RBMP timeline.

7. AOB

AF asked whether a cost/benefit analysis was being conducted on the implementation of WFD. PMcM replied that cost-effectiveness analysis process would ensure that the costs and benefits of measures would be assessed as part of the development of programmes of measures.

8. Date of next meeting

It was proposed that the next meeting take place on 5 September 2007.