

Minutes of 9th Meeting

Northern Ireland Water Framework Directive Stakeholder Forum

River House, Belfast

5th September 2007

Attendance: Forum Members

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| Gareth Bowden | DOE (EHS) |
| William Caldwell | DOE (PEPG) – acting chairperson |
| Joanne Gaffney | Aquaculture Initiative |
| Clifford Henry | DOE (EHS) |
| Uel Irwin | AES Kilroot |
| Aileen Lawson | Ulster Farmers Union |
| Robbie Marshall | Fresh Water Taskforce (UAF) |
| Mark McGuigan | South West College (Omagh) |
| Philip McMurray | DOE (PEPG) |
| Ian Morrow | NI Chamber of Commerce & Industry |
| Brian Murphy | CNCC |
| James Robinson | Fresh Water Taskforce (RSPB) |
| Julian Smyth | DRD Water Policy Division |
| David Wright | DCAL Fisheries |

Secretariat: Brenda Cuning DOE (PEPG)

Apologies:

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| 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 |
| Karen McCambley | NILGA |
| John Mills | DRD Water Policy Division |
| Alex Scullin | NI Agricultural Producers Association |
| Paul Simpson | DOE |
| Andrew Sloan | NI Sports Council |
| Graham Smith | General Consumer Council NI |
| Trevor Wright | Port of Larne |

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting & matters arising

The minutes of the 8th meeting on 23 May 2007 were approved with minor amendments to the apologies recorded.

2. Matters arising from minutes & updates paper

There were two matters arising:

- Joanne Gaffney requested an update on shellfish designations. This is to be included in the next updates paper.
- Robbie Marshall repeated his request for a timeline of key dates leading up to RBMP. A draft is to be tabled at the next meeting.

3. Significant Water Management Issues

Clifford Henry (CH) confirmed to the Forum that the SWMI reports (under the heading "Water Matters – have your say") had been published on 22 June 2007, six months ahead of the WFD deadline. Copies of the reports and summary leaflets had been widely distributed, and requests had been received for further copies. No responses had been received to date.

James Robinson (JR) said that the reports were good on technical information but that they might not get across to a non-technical audience. He asked what DOE intended to engage on the reports (see item 4).

Robbie Marshall (RM) pointed out that with regards to septic tanks, it would not be necessary to await the outcome of the SWMI reports etc. and asked how EHS were taking forward the issue. He stressed that it was necessary to be proactive, in order to meet the WFD deadlines, and again suggested a complete review of existing septic tanks was required (as under Cavan Bye-laws).

CH replied that the Cavan Bye-laws were being studied as part of gathering best practice examples to inform DOE policy, through a project under NS SHARE. This project would also be looking at the pressures from dispersed settlement and seek to map existing tanks (many of which predated consenting requirements).

He acknowledged that currently there was no routine inspection of all septic tanks, but said that if a problem arose, investigative monitoring could be carried out, and that NI were the only area of the UK which consented septic tanks under water legislation.

Brian Murphy (BM) made reference to the judicial review of Planning Policy Statement 14 (sustainable development in the countryside) and said that all new septic tanks needed to be state of the art.

Aileen Lawson (AL) pointed out that farmers felt aggrieved that septic tanks were not being tackled and said that more detailed information was needed from regulators.

CH clarified that while EHS used staff employed by councils, consenting septic tanks was not a function for councils under the Water Order.

Action: Information on Septic Tanks to be added to updates paper

Action: Specification (& outcomes) of project to be brought to Forum

4. WFD event 2007 – CSG evening meetings

The Forum were advised that, as agreed at the special meeting held in June, this year's WFD event was being run as 9 separate evening meetings, within the Catchment Stakeholder Group areas, and with the Water Matters (SWMI) report as the focus.

During the discussion which followed, it was noted that there was general agreement that an independent facilitator was important for the meetings, that participants be encouraged to give feedback on issues and solutions in a number of ways (through open discussion, questionnaires etc.) and that future meetings of the CSGs and the RBMP process needed to be highlighted.

5. WFD event 2008 – discussion of options

JR suggested that the format of this year's event (9 evening meetings) should be reviewed before deciding on next year's event. It was agreed that this could be discussed at the next meeting.

Action: Initial feedback on the Water Matters evenings on agenda for next meeting

6. Developing sector-specific messages

Forum members were asked to consider the issue of sector specific messages, in terms of what messages need to be addressed to which sectors and by what mechanisms.

JR said it would be useful to have an overview of what had happened before this (for example in regards to NS SHARE) and also on what government sees as a relevant degree of participation.

CH said that the recent work on the SWMI publication had been done under the public participation element of the NS SHARE project, including meetings being managed or funded through the project (e.g. the independent facilitator for CSG meetings), and the NS SHARE website. The last element of the project would be the production of a RBMP strategy.

Philip McMurray (PMc) acknowledged the Freshwater Taskforce work on the Wetlanders events, and their subsequent proposals, which had stimulated a lot of discussions between DOE and DEHLG (Dept. of Environment, Heritage & Local Govt). He pointed out that, unlike within the cross-border waste campaign, it was difficult to identify messages for individual members of the public.

He put forward that the issue of personal responsibility was not as clear under the WFD, given that many of the issues affecting the water environment were related to sectors (e.g. industry, wastewater treatment, agriculture). He said that it would be more cost effective (at this stage) to produce guidance or legislation aimed at sectors, rather than doing a publicity campaign.

He asked what would be the messages that would affect the public, looking beyond water charges, to the water environment.

Uel Irwin (UI) suggested that there needed to be a focus on moral issues, while RM said that highlighting the costs would get real public participation. BM said that behaviours by sector (including public) needed to be identified, and then the best way of influencing the required behaviour change.

The Forum briefly discussed several 'working examples' which were acknowledged as useful in educating people about problems and solutions.

In response to a question from JR, CH told the Forum that as funding for the current NS SHARE project was due to end in March 2008, funding would be sought through INTERREG 4.

7. Work Programme

CH briefly outlined some of the issues leading to draft RBMP. Joanne Gaffney (JG) asked to see more information on Programme of Measures.

Action: Basic measures from POMs sub-group to be brought to Forum

William Caldwell (WC) indicated to the Forum that discussions were being held on the issue of whether to produce single RBMPs for each IRBD (in conjunction with relevant competent authorities in Ireland).

8. AOB

Mark McGuigan (MM) explained some of the ongoing projects at Omagh College (e.g. use of willow for energy, separation of polluted areas from water courses) and asked what would be the best way of highlighting and sharing information and outcomes from such projects. CH replied that EHS Catchment Officers would be in touch with local projects, and agreed to contact MM on this.

Action: Clifford Henry to contact Mark McGuigan (contact details forwarded)

JG asked if funding could be sourced for a tangible project in each area. Gareth Bowden (GB) replied that application could be made under INTERREG 4 funding, and CH said that Water Management Unit's 3 internal RBD groups were working on projects.

Julian Smyth (JS) informed the Forum that an independent panel had been established to carry out a review of the proposed water charges. The initial report from this panel would be sent to Ministers by the end of September.

James Robinson (JR) asked for an update on the review of Flood Management Policy.

Action: Flood Management Policy Review to be included as item at next meeting

9. Date of next meeting

It was proposed that the next meeting take place on 27 November 2007.