

Meeting of the Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group

26th March, 2019 at 11.00am

Bedford Hall, Dublin Castle

1. Introduction

Maurice Buckley (Chair) welcomed the Minister and attendees and outlined the agreed agenda.

2. Opening Comments from Minister Moran

Minister Moran thanked the Group for its important work to date and acknowledged the contribution of Dawn Livingstone who has moved on from the post of Chief Executive Officer of Waterways Ireland.

3. Minutes of Meeting of 12th October, 2018

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 12th October, 2018 were approved.

4. Correspondence and Matters arising

The Secretariat informed the Group that a co-ordinated response issued to a request that was received by the Office of Public Works (OPW), National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Electricity Supply Board (ESB) and Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) in relation to the protocol being operated to lower the lake levels in Lough Allen. A similar response also issued to a press query on the same topic, received by OPW.

4.1 Fish Passes

- IFI confirmed that a separate forum will be established to examine the subject of fish passes and requested that the matter be left open for future consideration by the Group should any flooding issues arise.
- The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) has established a Steering Committee for Shannon Fish Passage Improvement.

5. Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures and Communications

5.1 Work Programme, 2019

The Chair of the Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures (OPW) thanked the members of the Group for their contribution to the Work Programme for 2019. The Group approved the draft Work Programme for 2019 and agreed to its publication on the OPW website.

5.2 Shannon Maintenance

5.2.1 Targeted Maintenance Programme

The Chair informed the Group that good progress has been made with targeted maintenance activities and provided an update on work undertaken to date, with consent from the NPWS. Work involving silt removal and tree-cutting has taken place in two locations since the last meeting of the Group in October, 2018.

A discussion took place in relation to carrying out work involving silt removal at Meelick Weir, which was originally scheduled as part of the targeted maintenance works.

5.2.2 Lough Allen Protocol

The Group was updated by the ESB as follows:

- The protocol for Lough Allen was operated again this past Winter. Target levels were reached in January and early March.
- Work is underway to identify the scope of environmental assessments required if the protocol is to be extended in the long-term. Surveys have been carried out to identify possible spawning grounds of Irish Pollan and there are plans to repeat these surveys next Winter.
- Consideration is to be given to the appropriate environmental assessments required to continue with the trial for a further year.
- Chair confirmed the importance of assessing the potential benefits and the costs associated with operating the protocol as part of a longer-term arrangement.

5.2.3 Callows Pinch Points

OPW provided an update on the study for the Shannon Callows region along the reach between Athlone and Meelick Weir.

A consultant has been appointed to develop a hydraulic model and to produce a report which is expected next month. From the study's results, the OPW will assess what, if any, benefit the proposed maintenance would offer to the Callows region over the summer period while maintaining the navigation requirements for the Shannon. This will include an analysis of associated costs and potential benefits for the environment. Waterways Ireland gave an update on the project for reinstatement of the walkway at Meelick Weir. It confirmed that there will be no impact on the management regime of the water levels.

5.2.4 Lower Channel

The specification for the Hydro-geomorphic study of the Lower Shannon Group was circulated to the Group in advance of the meeting. The Group discussed and agreed the specification for the study and gave its approval to go to tender.

5.3 Strategic Programme of Maintenance

The Chair of the Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures (OPW) informed the Group that the Sub-committee has commenced a desk-top study to identify the potential scope and scale of a Programme of Maintenance for the Shannon. Preliminary information identified as part of the study will be collated and mapped for further analysis. This will involve screening against measures already planned or possible by agencies, including through the implementation of major and minor flood defence schemes.

The Group acknowledged that the development and implementation of any Programme would be subject to planning permission, public consultation and environmental and economic assessments, at a strategic level. It is expected that estimated costs, including those for environmental assessments, will be available for the next meeting of the Group.

5.4 Communications

The Chair of the Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures (OPW) confirmed that the Work Programme for 2019 will be published on www.opw.ie following its approval by the Group.

6. Update on the Flood Risk Management Plans for the Shannon Region

OPW gave an update on the Flood Risk Management Plans of which 21 of the 50 prioritised schemes are in the Shannon catchment. OPW will continue to work with the local authorities on the project briefs and tendering for these schemes during the course of the year.

AOB

- Waterways Ireland is working to develop a tourism plan for the Shannon and will give a short presentation to the Group at its next meeting.
- Waterways Ireland informed the Group of work undertaken to develop a Google tracker of the River Shannon.

Members of the Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Group (or their representatives) in attendance.

Department/Agency	Representative
Office of Public Works	Maurice Buckley (Chairman), John Murphy.
City and County Managers Association	Lar Power
Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	Colin Ryan
Irish Water	Gerry Galvin
Bord na Móna	Joe Lane
Waterways Ireland	Éanna Rowe
ESB	Tom Browne for Pat O'Doherty
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Amanda Mooney for Dr. Ciaran Byrne
Environmental Protection Agency	Andy Fanning for Laura Burke

Others in Attendance

Minister of State	Kevin 'Boxer' Moran TD, Minister of State for the Office of Public Works and Flood Relief
Office of Public Works	John Sydenham, Brian Brogan, Jackie Stewart, Joan Murphy.

Apologies:

Joe McGrath, Tipperary Co. Co.

Pat O'Doherty, ESB.

Dr Ciaran Byrne, IFI.