

Minutes of Meeting

Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group

31st October, 2019 at 11.00am

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Kildare St, Dublin 2.

Introduction

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

Opening Comments from Minister Moran

Minister Moran acknowledged the work of the Group and thanked its members for work undertaken to date.

Minutes of Meeting of 26th March, 2019

The draft Minutes of the meeting held on 26th March were approved by the Group.

Correspondence and Matters arising

The Secretariat informed the Group that a number of Parliamentary Questions were raised seeking information on the Appropriate Assessment undertaken to carry out maintenance activities close to Meelick Weir together with details relating to the license obtained to carry out the work.

Additional correspondence was received outlining a series of questions in relation to the environmental considerations and permission to carry out the maintenance work undertaken at Meelick Weir.

Responses were co-ordinated and issued by OPW confirming that the work was undertaken as part of the restoration works to Meelick Weir and its walkway for which planning consent was obtained by Waterways Ireland.

Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures

The Chair of the sub-committee thanked the Group for their contribution to the Work Programme for 2019. The Work Programme is now published on www.opw.ie and planning is underway for the Work Programme for 2020.

The Chair presented the following update to the Group:

- Work has now been undertaken in five locations identified in the Targeted Maintenance Programme. This work involved the removal of silt and emergent vegetation and tree-cutting, as necessary.
- At its meeting in March, the Group agreed to a preliminary assessment of a strategic programme of maintenance to halt the deterioration of the River Shannon to improve the

conveyance capacity of the channel. A report on this assessment was circulated to the Group in advance for discussion at the meeting.

- The Group also discussed a report produced following a modelling assessment of the potential flood risk benefits for the Callows region, from preserving the navigation channel along the reach between Athlone and Meelick Weir. The report shows that there are possible benefits to adjoining agricultural lands if a number of constrictions or 'pinch points' in the area studied were removed.

Having discussed the reports on the preliminary assessment for a strategic programme of maintenance and the study on the removal of constrictions in the Callows region, the Group agreed that a Memorandum be brought to Government with a proposal to progress and fund these works. It also acknowledged the requirements for public consultation and appropriate environmental assessments to advance to the necessary planning process, subject to the Government Decision.

Lough Allen protocol

The ESB updated the Group on the trial for lowering the lake levels in Lough Allen under the agreed protocol.

- An assessment of the protocol on Lough Allen levels and discharges using 20 years of historical data has been completed. The assessment identified certain benefits to managing flood risk as a result of operating the trial.
- Surveys to identify any impact on Pollan as a result of lowering the lake levels are ongoing. The results from these surveys will help to inform any necessary adjustments.
- The Group agreed to continue with the trial on a temporary basis pending the completion of a flood relief scheme for Carrick on Shannon, as proposed in the overall flood risk management plans for the area. Consideration will be given to the assessments required to monitor any effects on the environment and species during the period of its operation.

Lower Channel

The OPW updated the Group on progress on the tendering process for a hydro-geomorphic assessment on the historical processes of the Lower Shannon. The contract for this study has now been awarded and results are expected in Q2, 2020.

A steering group has been established comprising members/nominees of the Sub-committee on the Work Programme and Measures and local authority representatives. The first meeting of the Steering Group will take place on 1st November, 2019.

The outcome of this study is expected to provide a better understanding of the channel to possibly inform measures that may reduce some restrictions that have occurred in the area.

Update on Flood Risk Management Plans for the Shannon Region

The OPW made a presentation to the Group on Flood Risk Management for the Shannon Region. This included flood relief schemes underway and proposed as part of the Government's €1bn investment in flood relief over the coming decade and other potential measures to address flood risk.

The OPW is continuing to work in partnership with local authorities to progress the design and delivery of 57 schemes prioritised under the Flood Risk Management Plans arising from the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme.

AOB

- Irish Water made a presentation on the Water Supply Project for the information of the Group.
- Waterways Ireland made a presentation on its Tourism Plan for the 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.
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht/NPWS	Niall O'Donnchú
Environmental Protection Agency	Laura Burke
ESB	Pat O'Doherty
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government	Colin Ryan

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 Curtin, John Sydenham, Brian Brogan, Jackie Stewart.
Waterways Ireland	Éanna Rowe
Irish Water	Pat Murphy Michael Goss
ESB	Tom Browne

Apologies:

John McDonagh, Waterways Ireland
 Dr Ciarán Byrne, Inland Fisheries Ireland
 Joe MacGrath, CEO Tipperary Co Co/CCMA
 Gerry Galvin, Irish Water
 Lar Power, Leitrim Co Co /CCMA