

Minutes of Meeting

Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group

30th April, 2020 at 11.00am

Introduction

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

Opening Comments from Minister Moran

Minister Moran acknowledged that flooding issues presented a difficult start to the year and thanked the Group for the co-operation of agencies involved.

Minutes of Meeting of 31st October, 2019

The draft Minutes of the meeting on 31st October, 2019 were approved by the Group. Presentations given by Waterways Ireland and Irish Water are to be published with the approved Minutes.

Correspondence and Matters arising

The Secretariat updated the Working Group on correspondence received in relation to activities on the River Shannon since the last meeting. The format of correspondence varied between Parliamentary Questions, TDs Representations and Press Queries. Topics ranged across most of the areas on which the Group is focussed.

Responses were co-ordinated by OPW with input from relevant members of the Group as appropriate.

Communications

The Chair of the Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures confirmed that the Sub-committee has agreed the Work Programme for 2020 and that subject to agreement by the main Group, the Programme will be published on www.opw.ie.

Review of Winter 2019/20

The Group discussed the Winter of 2019/20.

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government informed the Group that Emergency Management worked well and that daily reports were circulated. Debriefing material is not yet available due to the situation with Covid 19.

Local authorities informed the Group that emergency management teams were activated and links between the various agencies involved were effective. Overall the situation was well managed. Flooding occurred in car parks and on the streets in Carrick on Shannon. The Quay

wall was breached and pumping interventions and barriers proved successful. There was no damage to private property in the area.

Waterways Ireland highlighted that harbours were under water and that clean-up operations are ongoing.

OPW provided an update on water levels from August, 2019 up to the end of March, 2020. The flooding event between 16th February and 22nd March was a 1:20 year event based on data available for Banagher. While a lot of land flooded, a small number of properties are known to have flooded.

The ESB reported that while the discharge of water continued for an extended period at Parteen Weir due to heavy rainfall. It indicated that the discharge had slowed down since 25th March. During this period, the maximum flow possible was directed through the power station and there is no alternative to discharging the remainder down the Old River Shannon.

Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures

The Chair of the Sub-committee thanked the Group for their contribution to the Work Programme for 2020. The Group agreed the Work Programme and to its publication on www.opw.ie.

The Group addressed the following areas of work:

- Chair thanked all agencies involved with the delivery of targeted maintenance works which have now been undertaken in five locations.
- The protocol for Lough Allen is continuing, on a temporary basis, pending the completion of a flood relief scheme for Carrick on Shannon. The protocol could not be implemented during the past Winter. Studies to identify any impact on Pollan were repeated and did not identify spawning grounds.
- The hydro-geomorphological study of the Lower Shannon is at an advanced stage. A draft report has been compiled and feedback is currently being collated from the steering group and the Sub-committee. A discussion took place on the possibility of identifying additional information in the context of recent flooding.
- Following a decision by the Group, a Memorandum went to Government in December proposing a €7m strategic programme of maintenance for the River Shannon and for the removal of a number of ‘pinch points’ at the Callows region. This decision was noted by Government together with a proposal for funding the works. The delivery of the works will be underpinned by an Agreement between Waterways Ireland and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Implications of Covid 19

The Group discussed the implications of Government restrictions due to the coronavirus.

Only work that falls into the category of essential services is permitted at this time. Access to sites to carry out work and environmental analysis has not been possible due to these restrictions.

It is anticipated that some restrictions may be lifted next week and that this will enable progress of further essential works. It is possible that the funding situation may be affected and that this may impact on budgets and the capacity to deliver Work Programmes. While the impact is evolving, the Group agreed that a note to this effect be included in the Work Programme for 2020.

The Chair stated that the Work Programme had been prepared before Covid 19 became an issue and that work will need to be prioritised.

Update on Flood Risk Management Plans for the Shannon Region

Good progress is being made on the delivery of schemes prioritised from the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs). These are now being brought forward by their respective Local Authorities as part of the arrangements for the delivery of the first tranche, bringing to 60 the number of schemes identified in the FRMPs that are currently being progressed nationally.

Work is progressing to advance flood relief works in Athlone which made a significant difference during recent floods.

AOB

The Chair thanked Minister Moran for his work on flooding and support to the Group during his term.

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
Dr Ciarán Byrne	Inland Fisheries Ireland
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government	Colin Ryan
Waterways Ireland	John McDonagh
City and County Managers Association	Lar Power, Leitrim Co Co Joe MacGrath, Tipperary Co Co
Irish Water	Gerry Galvin

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.
Waterways Ireland	Éanna Rowe
ESB	Tom Browne