

Minutes of Meeting

Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group

4th November 2021 at 11.00am

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed attendees and commented on the effective work of the Group to date despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chair acknowledged the attendance and emphasised the importance of having senior representatives present at meetings.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th March, 2021 were approved by the Group.

3. Correspondence and Matters arising

The Secretary updated the Group on correspondence received since the last meeting. The format generally varied between Parliamentary Questions and TDs Representations. Topics covered many of the areas on which the work of the Group is focussed including water levels on the River Shannon, removal of the 'pinch points' in the Callows region, maintenance activities and the establishment of a single agency to manage the River Shannon. Responses were co-ordinated with input from the relevant agencies.

4. Sub-committee on the Work Programme and Measures

The OPW gave an update on progress on the work of the Sub-committee on the Work Programme and Measures.

- The annual Work Programme sets out the extensive range of activities planned by members of the Group that may contribute to managing flood risk along the River Shannon. The sub-committee is preparing a draft Work Programme for 2022 which will be circulated to the Group for approval to publish on www.gov.ie. The Chair asked the CCMA to remind local authorities to consider any inputs to the Work Programme.
- The ESB has prepared an application for a Section 21 licence to continue with the protocol for lowering the lake levels on Lough Allen. The application has been submitted to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) following the commencement of the surveys agreed with the NPWS.

- Following the completion of a hydro-geomorphological study of the Lower River Shannon, work is underway to develop a brief to appoint a consultant to progress Stage I of the project. Stage I builds on earlier studies and aims to develop a series of measures, preliminary costings and designs. The brief for Stage I will be circulated to the Group for comments. It is anticipated that the tendering process will commence in 2-3 weeks subject to the volume of feedback received.
- Waterways Ireland has identified five areas for maintenance work involving tree cutting. This work is due to commence before the end of the year/early 2022 subject to the outcome of Appropriate Assessments.
- A brief is being developed to appoint a consultant to prepare a Strategic Environmental Assessment for a programme of strategic maintenance along the River Shannon. The draft brief will be circulated for consideration and approval by the Group. Waterways Ireland, on behalf of the Group, will act as the Contracting Authority for this project.

5. Communications

The OPW gave an update on the work of Sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement. The sub-committee has agreed to commence work on the development of a Communications Strategy for the Group. It is also considering the development and content for a dedicated website to further promote information on the work of the Group. Funding has been confirmed to support this proposal. The Group was also updated on work to progress a television series on the River Shannon.

A discussion took place on the area of communications generally. It was acknowledged that due to the geographical nature of the River Shannon, it is not possible to prevent flooding. The Flood Risk Management Plans for the Shannon River Basin District (RBD) will protect 95% of properties at significant risk from flooding. Other projects such as those being progressed by this Group will help to mitigate some of the impact of flooding on agricultural lands. The Group agreed that more emphasis is needed on what is achievable and on all of the work already identified to manage flood risk along the River Shannon. Various options were discussed in terms of the approach to communications including the possibility of engaging professional services to assist with the development of a Communications Strategy.

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

Along with the 12 completed schemes in the Shannon RBD, a further 37 flood relief schemes will be delivered under the Government's €1.3bn investment in flood relief measures over the lifetime of the National Development Plan to 2030.

The OPW gave an update on progress with the delivery of schemes planned for the Shannon RBD. Good progress is being made and steering groups are meeting on a monthly basis to progress the design of individual schemes.

Specific updates were provided on the following:

- **Ennis Lower, Co. Clare:** Scheme has reached substantial completion.
- **Springfield, Co. Clare:** Progress with construction has been delayed due to poor weather conditions. Work is due to recommence in Spring, 2022.
- **Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim:** Stage I: Option Assessment, Scheme Development and Design

Project websites are being developed for all major flood relief projects for the purpose of providing updates to the public throughout the development, design and construction of individual schemes.

7. Minister's Closing Comments

Minister O'Donovan thanked the Group for its work to date and emphasised the importance of focussing on protecting individuals and communities at significant risk from flooding. The Minister also referred to the discussion on communications and the importance of developing this area.

8. AOB

No issues raised.

Members in attendance

Department/Agency	Representative
Office of Public Works	Maurice Buckley (Chairman)
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage / NPWS	Niall Ó Donnchú
Waterways Ireland	John McDonagh.
City and County Managers Association	Lar Power, Leitrim Co. Co.
Irish Water	Eamon Gallen
Bord na Móna	Ger Breen
ESB	Paddy Hayes
Environmental Protection Agency	Laura Burke

Others in attendance

Minister of State	Patrick O'Donovan TD, Minister of State for the Office of Public Works
Minister's Advisor	Michael O'Connor
Office of Public Works	John Sydenham, Ciaran Conroy, Jackie Stewart, Melessa Lunney, Fiach O'Keeffe, Garret Nolan
City and County Managers Association	Carmel Kirby, Clare Co. Co.
Waterways Ireland	Éanna Rowe
ESB	Tom Browne
Irish Water	Neil Lenihan
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Louise Byrne
Inland Fisheries Ireland	David McInerney

Apologies

Bill Callanan, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Pat Dowling, Clare County Council.

Colin Ryan, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.