

Minutes of Meeting

Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group

Venue: National Emergency Co-ordination Centre, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Kildare Street, Dublin 2

11 October 2023 at 11:00am

1. Introduction

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

2. Minutes

The minutes of meeting held on 26 April, 2023 were agreed.

3. Correspondence

OPW updated the Group on correspondence received since the last meeting. A number of Parliamentary Questions relating to water levels, summer flooding, the removal of ‘pinch points’ in the Callows region, loss of fodder and the River Shannon Management Agency Bill 2020 were received. Responses were coordinated with input from the relevant agencies.

4. Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures

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

4.1 Work Programme 2023

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.

All works in the 2023 Work Programme are underway and progressing well. A request will issue to all agencies to consider planned activities that may contribute to managing flood risk along the Shannon for the 2024 Work Programme, which will be circulated to the Group for approval to publish at next working group meeting.

4.2 Lough Allen Protocol

The ESB obtained a Section 21 licence under the Wildlife Acts from the National Parks and Wildlife Service on 3 October 2023 to continue with the temporary operation of the protocol for reducing the lake levels on Lough Allen. The ESB is continuing to carry out ecological monitoring and surveying agreed with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

4.3 Study of Lower Channel

A consultant was appointed to identify feasible sedimentation and vegetation management options on the River Mulkear and Lower Shannon. The study was completed in August 2023.

A draft Lower Shannon Hyrdromorphology report has been circulated to the sub group on Work Programme and Measures for review. It is envisaged that the project group will meet in January 2024 to draft potential options to move to completion of analysis in due course.

4.4 Programme of Strategic Maintenance

Waterways Ireland updated the group, strategic maintenance in 3 locations is complete and a 4th is 70% complete. A 5th location is at pre-screening and due for commencement shortly. The remaining sites require environmental assessment before strategic maintenance can commence.

4.5 Project for Callows Region

The Group approved the proposal by the Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures to issue a tender for an Ecological Consultant to carry out a high level environmental feasibility study. The feasibility study will consider the potential positive and negative ecological impacts of the proposed works on the River Shannon between Athlone and Meelick.

5 Sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

5.1 Communications strategy

Gibney's Communications gave a presentation of a proposed Stakeholder Map and Communications Strategy. There was discussion on stakeholder prioritisation and target audience identification; communicating the ongoing work in terms of investment in protecting homes, environmental impact and climate change and using the website as a focal point for information in relation to the group activities on the Shannon.

5.2 New website

The OPW gave a presentation on a new website for the Group, which is currently in the design and development phase. Input was requested from all members for website content.

There was discussion on proposed content for the website including publishing real-time information to indicate if the sluice gates, managed by ESB and Waterways Ireland, are open or closed. It was agreed that the communications sub-group would further discuss the best approach in making this information available on the new website.

The website will be circulated to Sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement for approval before going live.

5.3 TV Series

The TV series is now at contract stage and filming is expected to commence in 2024.

5.4 Athlone Flood Scheme Video

The OPW screened a video on the new Athlone Flood Alleviation scheme, which will be published on the new website.

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

The OPW gave an update on flood relief schemes for the Shannon River Basin District (RBD). In relation to the Kings Island Flood Relief Scheme Limerick City County Council are going to tender and the scheme should commence in 2024. A paper was circulated.

7. AOB

The OPW advised that the Shannon Management Agency Bill is a priority for drafting in autumn 2023 and work is ongoing.

The ESB advised there are two turbines and the spillway gate in operation at Ardnacrusha presently. Maintenance on two units is expected to be completed shortly.

Attendees

Department/Agency	Main Representative
Office of Public Works	Maurice Buckley , Chairman Robert Mooney , Assistant Secretary
ESB	Paddy Hayes , Chief Executive Officer
Waterways Ireland	John Mc Donagh , Chief Executive Officer.
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Bill Callanan , Assistant Secretary

Others in attendance

Office of Public Works	Amanda Cummins; Lorna Dempsey; Ann Devlin; Sinead Gavin; Stephen Manning; Jennifer McCudden; Eavan O'Brien; Gavin Poole; Isabell Smyth;
Bord Na Móna	Ger Breen
City and County Managers Association	Sean Lenihan
EPA	Mary Gurrie
ESB	Martin Stronge
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Michael O'Donoghue;
Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage	Colin Ryan
Gibney Communications	Eamon Mackey; Mark O'Doherty
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Cathal Gallagher
Ministers Advisor	Michael O'Connor
Uisce Éireann	Michael Goss; Mairead Conlan
Waterways Ireland	Brian Treacy

Apologies

OPW	Patrick O'Donovan TD , Minister of State.
Inland Fisheries	Francis O'Donnell , CEO
County and City Management Association	Pat Dowling , Chief Executive, Clare County Council. Lar Power , Chief Executive, Leitrim County Council
National Parks and Wildlife	Niall O'Donnchú , Assistant Secretary and Director General NPWS
Uisce Eireann	Eamon Gallen , CEO