

## **Minutes of Meeting**

### **Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group**

Venue: OPW, Shannon Room, 1GQ, Georges Quay, Dublin 2

10 April 2024 at 11:00 am

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#### **1. Introduction**

The Chair welcomed attendees and advised that the Chairman of the OPW, Maurice Buckley, was unable to attend, but thanked all members of the Group for their co-operation and engagement during his tenure.

#### **2. Minutes**

The minutes of meeting held on 11 October, 2023 were agreed.

#### **3. Correspondence**

The OPW updated the Group on correspondence received since the last meeting. A number of Parliamentary Questions relating to : River Shannon Management Body Bill, Membership and Meetings of the Shannon Group ; Mitigating measures to address flooding in Shannon Callows; Summer flooding in July and operation of sluices. Responses were coordinated with input from the relevant agencies.

#### **4. Sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement**

##### **4.1 New Website**

The OPW presented the group's new website: <https://rivershannongroup.ie/>. The new website is now the primary point of official information on all Shannon flood risk projects and activities. The sub group also developed informational video content on Flooding in the Shannon Callows, Flood Relief Schemes, Management of Water Levels and the physical nature of the River Shannon.

The ESB and Waterways Ireland to develop real-time information on the operations of sluice gates for publication on their respective websites with a view to consolidated information being published on the new group website. The Chair thanked the Communications Sub-Committee for their work on the website project.

#### 4.2 T.V. Series

The TV series is expected to start filming in Autumn 2024. OPW gave a brief outline of the contents of the series.

### **5. 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:

#### 5. Work Programme 2024

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 Work Programme for 2024 was circulated to the Group in advance of the meeting and the Group agreed to its publication.

A discussion took place on streamlining the format of the Work Programme and integrating work into the new website. It was agreed the communications and stakeholder sub group would review.

#### 5.2 Lough Allen Protocol

The ESB informed the group that a Section 21 licence from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) was received on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023. The ESB advised they have applied for a licence for next October 2024.

#### 5.3 Study of Lower Channel

A study to identify feasible sedimentation and vegetation management options on the River Mulkear and Lower Shannon was completed in August 2023. Work is continuing on the development of possible measures to manage vegetation which has built up downstream of the University of Limerick and the Mulkear River. OPW advise that this work is expected to be completed by December, 2024.

#### 5.4 Programme of Strategic Maintenance

Waterways Ireland updated the group on strategic maintenance programme.

23 sites have been agreed by the main steering group of the Shannon Flood State Agency Co-Ordination group for the Strategic Maintenance programme on the River Shannon. Five of these sites had an appropriate screening assessment undertaken previously with work now complete on 3 of the 5 sites. During the course of 2024 Waterways Ireland will continue tree pruning works (subject to suitable conditions) at the two remaining sites, Lack and New Cut.

The remaining 18 sites will be packaged together for environmental and ecological assessment.

#### 5.5 Project for Callows Region

OPW have issued a tender for an Ecological Consultant to carry out a high level environmental study and it is expected that a consultant will be appointed shortly. The study will consider the potential positive and negative ecological impacts of the proposed works on the River Shannon between Athlone and Meelick.

### **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). There are 13 completed schemes in the Shannon RBD which provide protection to over 2,600 properties.

There are 26 schemes currently being progressed. These include:

- Two schemes, Athlone and Springfield, which are currently at construction and are expected to reach substantial completion in 2024.
- A further 13 schemes where engineering consultants have been appointed, including the King's Island Flood Relief Scheme, where Limerick City and County Council recently commenced the tender process to appoint a Contractor for the scheme. On completion, the scheme will protect some 500 properties, with construction anticipated to commence in 2024 and a completion date approximately two years thereafter.
- 11 other schemes, 10 of which are small schemes. These schemes are being progressed directly by the relevant Local Authorities with full funding from the OPW – with one exception, Rahan, which is being progressed by OPW Design Section.

### **7. Review of winter 2023/24**

- There was a group discussion on levels of rainfall, water levels, and storm events during the previous winter.
- DAFM gave a short presentation on the Shannon Callows Flood Scheme 2023. Following exceptional flooding in the Shannon Callows during summer 2023, on 7 November 2023 the Shannon Callows Flood Scheme was announced as

a once-off measure. The aim of the scheme was to support farmers who have lost fodder due to flooding in the region during summer 2023. Funding of approximately €800,000 was allocated which allowed for a payment rate of €325 per hectare in the Shannon Callows impacted as determined by DAFMs Area Monitoring System and which were claimed by farmers on their 2023 Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) application. This was subject to a minimum area affected of 1ha and a maximum of 15ha and only applied to lands within the Shannon Callows SAC.

## **8. AOB**

The OPW advised that the preparation of legislation to improve the management of flood risk on the River Shannon is on the priority list for drafting for the Autumn Session.

## Attendees

Department/Agency	Main Representative
Office of Public Works	<b>Robert Mooney</b> , Assistant Secretary & Chair. <b>Stephen Manning</b> , Secretary to the Group & Chair Sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement. <b>Miriam Mulligan</b> , Chair Sub-committee Work Programme Measures.
Inland Fisheries Ireland	<b>Cathal Gallagher</b> , Head of Research and Development
Waterways Ireland	<b>Brian Treacy</b> , Western Regional Manager.
ESB	<b>Martin Stronge</b> , Hydro Manager.
Uisce Éireann	<b>Eamon Gallen</b> , CEO <b>Mairead Conlan</b> , Regional Water Resources Strategy Lead.
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	<b>David Buckley</b> , Principal of Head of Direct Payments Division.
County and City Management Association	<b>Alan Farrell</b>
Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage	<b>Sorcha de Brúch</b> , PO NPWS, Legislation and Licencing.

## Others in attendance

Office of Public Works	<b>Ann Devlin, Amanda Cummins, Eavan O'Brien, Lorna Dempsey, Kevin Corbett, Jim Casey</b>
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## Apologies

OPW	<b>Patrick O'Donovan TD</b> , Minister of State.
OPW	<b>Maurice Buckley</b> , Chairman.