

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

30th April 2025 at 2:30 pm

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed Minister Moran back to the OPW and outlined the agenda for the meeting. Minister Moran thanked the group for its progress to date.

2. Minutes

The minutes of meeting held on 31 October, 2024 were agreed.

3. Correspondence

The Secretariat updated the Group on correspondence received since the last meeting of the Group. Topics covered the management of water levels and the removal of pinch points in the Shannon Callows. Responses were co-ordinated by OPW with input from relevant members of the Group, as appropriate.

4. Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures

4.1 Work Programme 2025

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 2025 was circulated to the Group in advance of the meeting and was approved for publication on: <https://rivershannongroup.ie/>

4.2 Lough Allen Protocol

The ESB informed the group that a licence under Section 21 of the Wildlife Acts was issued by National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and received on 11th September, 2024. The ESB advised the level was within the protocol for Winter and is providing some flood mitigation downstream.

The ESB is continuing to carry out ecological monitoring and surveying agreed with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Inland Fisheries Ireland and ESB have held a number of meetings and are conducting drone surveys around a potential issue for breeding fish given the lower levels.

4.3 Study of Lower Channel

The OPW gave a presentation on the progress of the Lower Shannon Options Report, the final version of which is intended for circulation in May 2025. It is a study to identify feasible sedimentation management options in the River Mulkear catchment and the reach of the Old River Shannon from its confluence with the Mulkear to the upstream outskirts of Limerick City. The measures identified within final Options Report will be considered by the Programme and Measures Working Group in due course.

4.4 Programme of Strategic Maintenance

Waterways Ireland provided an update to the group on the strategic maintenance programme. The Strategic Maintenance Steering Group on behalf of the Group has agreed on 23 sites for the Strategic Maintenance Programme on the River Shannon, the list will remain a live list. Five of these sites had an appropriate screening assessment undertaken previously with work now complete on these 5 sites.

Waterways Ireland on behalf of the group have appointed an Environmental Consultant to progress assessments on the remaining identified sites, this work is ongoing and dependent on seasonal observation over the coming year, outcomes will be clear in the 4th quarter of 2025. As work progresses, sites which don't require further detailed assessment will be added to the work programme and completed in due course. Sites requiring further environmental and ecological assessment will be progressed by the appointed consultant.

4.5 Project for Callows Region

A Steering Group is in place to oversee the 'pinch points' project to examine the benefits of removing constrictions, resulting in lower summer water levels, through the Shannon Callows. The Shannon Callows includes two sites designated under European Environmental legislation, the River Shannon Callows SAC and the Middle Shannon Callows SPA. The project will need to comply with European law regarding ecological assessments.

An Ecological Consultant was appointed in June 2024 to carry out a high-level environmental study to consider the potential positive and negative ecological impacts of the proposed works on the River Shannon between Athlone and Meelick.

A report has now been completed by the consultant and submitted to OPW for review. It is anticipated that the report will be finalised in the near future and this will inform next steps.

5. Sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

5.1 'The Mighty Shannon' T.V. Series

The OPW has been working with the ESB and Waterways Ireland in order to identify storylines to be included in the Building Ireland six-part television series on the River Shannon. The programme will discuss a range of architectural, geographical and engineering heritage issues related to the Shannon region. It will also present some of the challenges including flooding issues and what is being done to manage flood risk along the Shannon. The project is currently in production and is expected to air on RTE in late 2025 or early 2026.

5.2 Group Website

The sub group has published real-time information on the operation of sluice gates on <https://rivershannongroup.ie/>. It was proposed that the group will focus on promotion of the website as it is a valuable resource for the residents and stakeholders in the Shannon Catchment Area.

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 flood relief schemes currently being progressed in the Shannon region, which may be summarised as follows:

- Two schemes, at **Athlone** and **Springfield**, are currently at construction stage and are approaching substantial completion. On completion, these schemes will protect 575 properties.
- 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, are being progressed directly by the relevant Local Authorities with funding and support from the OPW.

Future schemes

Under the national programme, work has yet to commence on a further 12 flood relief (Tranche II) schemes. OPW is piloting a new delivery model through four Tranche II flood relief schemes in Donegal and Kilkenny. The Pilot will inform the delivery model to be applied for the future tranche of schemes nationally and, in doing so, will be relevant to all schemes, including those in the Shannon region.

7. Review of Winter 2024/2025

Department of Agriculture commented that due to the dry winter season there is overall a surplus of fodder from 24/25 which can be carried over to 25/26 winter season, there was good conditions for winter cereals and spring crops.

8. Summary Discussion with Minister

The Minister took the opportunity to thank the Group for their continued work and collaboration.

9. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the group will take place in October 2025.

Attendees

Department/Agency	Main Representative
Office of Public Works	Kevin Moran T.D. , Minister of State John Conlon , Chairman & Chair, Robert Mooney , Assistant Secretary. Stephen Manning , Secretary to the Group & Chair Sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement. Miriam Mulligan , Chair Sub-committee Work Programme Measures.
Waterways Ireland	Brian Treacy , Western Regional Manager.
ESB	Paddy Hayes , CEO. Martin Stronge , Hydro Manager.
Uisce Éireann	Mairead Conlon .
Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine	Micheal O'Donoghue .
County and City Management Association	Steve Lahiffe , Clare County Council Adrian Kielty , Leitrim County Council
Environmental Protection Agency	Matthew Craig .

Others in attendance

Office of Public Works	Amanda Cummins, Eavan O'Brien, Lorna Dempsey, Gavin Poole
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Apologies

Local Government, Clare County Council	Carmel Kirby , CEO (Interim)
Environmental Protection Agency	Laura Burke , CEO
National Parks & Wildlife Service	Niall Ó Donnchú , Assistant Secretary
Waterways Ireland	John Mc Donagh , CEO
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Francis O'Donnell , CEO
Local Government	Joseph Gilhooly , CEO
Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine	Bill Callanan , CEO

Bord Na Mona	Tom Donnellan, CEO
Uisce Éireann	Niall Gleeson, CEO