

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

15th October 2025 at 2:30 pm

1. Introduction

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees

2. Minutes

The minutes of meeting held on 10th April, 2025 were agreed.

3. Correspondence

The Secretariat updated the Group on correspondence received since the last meeting of the Group.

A range of Parliamentary Questions were received on the following topics:

- legislation to establish a single national body to manage the River Shannon;
- reduction of water levels by one meter in Lough Allen, Lough Ree and Lough Derg to create additional capacity for managing high water flows during peak seasons;
- the improvement of the management of the River Shannon,
- plans to tackle flooding in the Shannon
- strategic maintenance on the Shannon Callows

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

4. Peatlands Climate Action Scheme

Bord Na Mona gave a presentation updating the group on the progress of the Peatlands Climate Action Scheme.

Bord na Móna owns 18.5% of peatlands in the River Shannon Catchment and Peatland Climate Action Scheme supports activities and improvements, including:

- more intensive management of water levels through drain-blocking and bunding;
- wetlands management;
- re-profiling that will deliver suitable hydrological conditions for development of wetlands, fens and bog habitats;
- seeding of targeted vegetation;
- proactive introduction of suitable peatland areas with Sphagnum moss to optimise climate action and associated benefits.

5. Presentation form Breeding Waders EIP

Owen Murphy (Breeding Waders EIP project) gave a presentation to the group. This EIP-Agri project is a €25 million nationwide project, co-funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and aims to secure existing Breeding Wader populations and support population recovery through landscape management and policy development. The Shannon Callows, between Athlone and Portumna, is a key site for breeding waders, including Lapwing, Redshank, Curlew, Snipe, and the rare Black-tailed Godwit. These birds nest on wet grasslands that flood in winter and spring.

The project aims to design, develop, and trail an innovative suite of measures that will be used in conjunction with known actions for the benefit of Breeding Waders.

This combination will seek to;

- Halt the decline in the Irish Breeding Wader population.
- Improve awareness of Breeding Waders and associated downward pressures.
- Drive population recovery on a National level.
- Increase capacity in the Predation Risk Management sector.

6. Shannon Callows “Pinch points” Project

OPW gave a presentation on the findings a high level environmental study in relation to a proposed project to remove ‘pinch points’ along the River Shannon Callows. The findings of this study highlighted that significant environmental analysis is required to fully assess the impact of the project.

The group agreed to establish a dedicated working group to consider next steps, including the consideration of further options to address flood risk on the Shannon Callows. It was agreed the working group would contact key stakeholders in the Shannon region to seek their inputs and report back to the Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group at its next meeting in April 2026.

7. Water Level Management

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, 14th October 2025, they will continue with the operation of the protocol until March 2026.

ESB/Waterways Protocol for Management of Sluices

There was discussion on the publication of the agreed protocol, which sets out ESB and Waterways Ireland operating procedures, on the website of the Group.

On a day-to-day basis, water levels on the Shannon River are managed in accordance with agreed protocols between Waterways Ireland and the ESB. There is daily communication and a co-ordinated approach between those two bodies in this regard. Water levels on the Shannon are monitored on a daily basis, along with weather forecasts. This informs decisions around sluice opening and closing procedures and the operation of weirs, within the agreed protocols.

The ESB and Waterways agreed to consider this proposal.

8. 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, work is now complete on these 5 sites. The Environmental Consultant is continuing to progress assessment, some of which will require planning permission.

The Minister requested that the 'hot stretch' in Lanesboro be added to the list of sites and this was agreed.

9. Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

The Chair led a discussion on the importance of effective communication and establishing standardised procedures for communication for ensuring consistent, timely, and accurate messaging to the media and the public.

TV Series 'The Mighty Shannon'

BUILDING IRELAND is producing a television series, titled 'The Mighty Shannon' with financial and logistical support from the OPW, the ESB and Waterways Ireland, with matching funding from RTÉ. Building Ireland have reported solid progress with no significant deviation from planned production schedule. Filming of the main content for the six episodes is now completed and the project is progressing to editing stage and on schedule to complete the production for Q2 2026.

Launch of River Shannon Group Website

The group's website (<https://rivershannongroup.ie/>) was officially launched on 15 October 2025. The website is designed to share information with communities and the general public about the work of the Group.

The website enables users to access real-time information on the operation of water level controls by the ESB and Waterways Ireland through sluice structures on the river and the three lakes (Loughs Allen, Ree and Derg).

The site provides information on flood relief schemes being undertaken by the OPW in partnership with local authorities and the strategic maintenance activities planned and undertaken on behalf of the Group.

A suite of animated videos explain how water levels are managed, the programme of flood relief schemes, and the nature of the river and why parts of the Shannon River Basin District, such as the Shannon Callows, can be especially vulnerable to flooding in times of prolonged and heavy rainfall.

The Minister led a discussion on the benefits of the website and his hope that this website will become a trusted reference point for everyone with an interest in the Shannon — from residents to researchers, from farmers to policymakers.

10.AOB

Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region

Uisce Eireann intend to submit a planning application to An Coimisiún Pleanála for the Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region complete with an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

Update on Flood Risk Management Plans for the Shannon Region

The Minister announced that the Springfield Flood Relief Scheme has reached substantial completion on 26/08/25 and this scheme is providing protection to some 21 properties.

The OPW gave an update on flood relief schemes for the Shannon River Basin District (RBD). There are 14 completed schemes in the Shannon RBD, which provide protection to over 2,600 properties, which includes most recently the scheme at Springfield:

There are 25 flood relief schemes currently being progressed these include:

- **Athlone**, which is currently at construction and is expected to reach substantial completion in late 2026/early 2027, the scheme, will protect some 550 properties.
- **King's Island Flood Relief Scheme**. The scheme has a work programme of 2 years and has a preliminary substantial completion date of early 2027. Upon completion, the scheme will protect some 500 properties. There are a further some 10 schemes where engineering consultants have been appointed.

- Of the 13 other schemes, these small schemes are being progressed directly by the relevant Local Authorities with full funding from the OPW – with two exceptions, Abbeydorney and Rahan, which are being progressed by OPW.

Future schemes

- Under the national programme, work has yet to commence on a further 12 flood relief (Tranche II) schemes in the Shannon region. The 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.

Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme

The Minister addressed the meeting and wanted to encourage the utilisation of the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme by Local Authorities. The purpose of the scheme is to provide funding to Local Authorities to undertake minor flood mitigation works or studies to address localised flooding and coastal protection problems within their administrative areas.

Martin Stronge ESB will be leaving the group and will be replaced by Henry Bouchier. The Chair thanked Martin for his valuable contribution to the group over the years.

11. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the group will be in April 2026, date to be decided.

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	John Mc Donagh , CEO
National Parks & Wildlife Service	Niall Ó Donnchú , Assistant Secretary
ESB	Martin Stronge , Hydro Manager
Uisce Éireann	Martina Duignan
Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine	Bill Callanan , Assistant Secretary
County and City Management Association	Morgan Lahiffe , Clare County Council David Minton , Leitrim County Council
Bord Na Mona	Enda Mc Donagh , Environmental Manager
Environmental Protection Agency	Matthew Craig

Others in attendance

Office of Public Works	Jim Casey , Lorna Dempsey , Eavan O Brien , Sinead Gavin , Amanda Cummins , Martina Mc Kiernan ,
ESB	Henry Bouchier
Waterways Ireland	Brian Treacy , Western Regional Manager.
Breeding Waders	Owen Murphy

Apologies

CCMA	Gordon Daly, CEO
Environmental Protection Agency	Laura Burke, CEO
ESB	Paddy Hayes, CEO
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Suzanne Campion, CEO(Interim)
CCMA	Joseph Gilhooly, CEO
Bord Na Mona	Tom Donnellan, CEO
Uisce Éireann	Niall Gleeson, CEO