

Erne & Melvin Catchment Stakeholder Group
Draft Record of Meeting
30th May 2013
Waterways Ireland, Enniskillen

ATTENDEES

Robert Bailie (NIEA) RB

Gerry Blake (NIEA) GB

George Butler (NIW) GBu

Iain Cooke IC

John Cunningham JC

Barney Devine BD

Malcolm Finney (Garrison Anglers) MF

Gareth Greer (Rivers Agency) GG

Norman Henderson (NIEA)

Stephen Hey (Kesh & District AC) SHeys

George Irvine (Kesh & District AC) GI

Bert Johnston (Fermanagh District Council) BJ

Paul Kearney (Erne & Melvin Enhancement Company) PK

Eileen Mallon (NIEA) EM

Robbie Marshall (UAF) RM

Paul McAleavy (DCAL) PMcA

Rodney McCrea (NIW) RMcC

Alan Morrow (DARD) AM

Carroll O'Dolan (Fermanagh Fracking Awareness Network) CO'D

Bernie O'Flaherty (Monaghan County Council) B'OF

Deirdre Spillane (NIEA) DS

Alvin Wilson (NIEA) AW (Chair)

1. Welcome & Introduction

Alvin Wilson welcomed everyone and explained that Jack Spratt, who usually chaired the meeting was unable to attend due to an operation. Alvin wished Jack a speedy recovery.

2. Minutes and Actions of previous meeting

The minutes from the last meeting held on the 24th October 2012 are available on the NIEA website at

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/erne_and_melvin_catchment_stakeholders_group_final_minutes_24th_october_2012.pdf

An update of the actions from the previous meeting were presented:

Action 1: All to report pollution found to the free phone hotline 0800 807060.

Response: Ongoing action all to note.

Action 2: NIEA to establish the number of vessels registered for Lough Erne and the percentage inspected.

Response: Waterways Ireland have 5569 vessels registered with approximately 1328 of these having potential for holding tanks. However vessels registered on the Erne may be used on any waterway in NI and vessels may remain on the registration unless an owner requests removal. Due to this variability it is difficult to attempt to calculate the percentage of vessels inspected for Lough Erne.

Another way of obtaining an idea of the number of vessels active on the lough was also examined by NIEA i.e. using aerial photos to count vessels, this give an estimate of around 670 vessels on the Erne.

NIEA conduct periodic inspections of vessels on the Erne system to assess sewage facilities. Last year 72 vessels inspected. Inspections are subject to staff resources, season, weather, number of vessels available to inspect on the day etc. NIEA maximise inspections by inspecting in where boat usage peak season, at the weekend in good weather. NIEA have also been working with hire cruiser companies to ensure compliance with the Prevention of Pollution (Erne System) Regulations NI 1994.

Action 3: All – to provide input to the Melvin & Arney LMA plan – contact Eileen Mallon on 028 92633442 or eileen.mallon@doeni.gov.uk

Response: Ongoing action all to note.

Action 4: All parties interested in finding out more about Rivers Trusts to contact Mark Horton on 028 867 61515 or mark@theriverstrust.org

Response: Ongoing action all to note.

Action 5: NIEA to consider inviting Tamboran to present at the next CSG meeting.

Response: NIEA were unable to take this action forward at this time. It was explained that NIEA could confirm that DOE has received no planning applications, applications for environmental permits or notifications of any operations due to take place associated with fracking in the Lough Allen Basin.

When, and if we do, receive any notification we will make contact with key stakeholders, including FFAN to make them aware as soon as practicable.

In recent discussions with NIEA, Tamboran indicated that they plan to drill a stratigraphic borehole in the second half of 2013 in the Lough Allen basin.

Tamboran outlined that this is to obtain core samples from the target shale in order to confirm viability of the project. This proposal will require notification and discussion with DOE Planning in order to identify and conform to any planning permissions that may be required. It has also been made clear to Tamboran that they must inform NIEA so that we can consider the operation and ensure any associated environmental permissions, depending on the specific activities planned, are in place.

It was suggested and agreed that this action be carried forward to a more appropriate time.

The minutes were then agreed.

Discussion relation to actions from 24 October 2012 meeting

RM commented that he thought the cruise hire companies were compliant but others may be causing a problem and suggested visits to boats at piers other than public piers such as that at the Manor House be conducted. DS replied that these piers were visited and visits can prove difficult due to resentment of inspecting vessels.

RM asked if there had been any oil drilling application in the Fermanagh area. AW replied that he was not aware of any formal application but suggested this be taken as an action.

Action 1: NIEA to provide update on oil drilling applications made in the Fermanagh area.

BJ commented that DOE, Planning and NIEA were responsible for looking at the fracking issue and should be able to rely on them to assess any environmental impacts. He had noted that the speakers invited to Fermanagh to talk on fracking were from the USA, Canada etc and speakers from these countries had also been against mobile phone masks.

3. Regional Manager's Update - Deirdre Spillane

DS gave a presentation on local regional operational issues and activities for the previous 6 months. DS detailed the number and severity of water pollution incidents and types in each severity category. There had been 84 reported pollution incidents, 68 which had been confirmed of which 9 were medium severity and 59 low. DS reminded all to report incidents to 0800 807060. DS also outlined monitoring works that had been carried out including dissolved Oxygen monitoring in the Sillees catchment. Other planned works including Prevention of Pollution (Erne System) Regulations NI 1994 and BASIS inspections were discussed. A copy of the presentation is available at

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/erne_and_melvin_catchment_stakeholders_group_regional_managers_update_30th_may_2013.pdf

Discussion

SH raised the issue of litter associated with rivers. It was suggested that rivers in the Kesh, Ballinamallard and Enniskillen areas were particularly affected by litter problems. A

discussion took place on the importance of both enforcement and prevention to control the problem. RM suggested fines of \$500 for dropping litter, as used in countries like California, should be used in NI. Bin provision was also discussed and had led to the dumping of domestic waste beside the bins in some areas. BJ explained that Fermanagh District Council had successfully used car registration number to track those found littering. The Leave No Trace campaign was highlighted.

AW asked if the Article 12 notices on industrial sites involved looking at the receiving waters. DS explained that a visual inspection of the receiving waters was part of the inspection.

4. Catchment Management Officer's update - Eileen Mallon

EM provided an update on the NIEA Water Quality Improvement Grant, status of the waterbodies in the west and projects of interest. EM encouraged all to apply to the NIEA Water Quality Improvement Grant before the closing date (14th of June) and outlined last year's project which was completed by Albert Keys from Enniskillen Angling Club. The 2009, 2012 and target 2015 status of the waterbodies in the Erne and Melvin CSG area were presented. EM suggested that those interested in finding out more about specific area and water quality status have a discussion at the tea break or contact her later. **Action 2:** All interested parties to contact EM for more information on water quality status and ideas of actions that could help improve water quality in the Erne & Melvin CSG area. Several projects in the area were discussed including the marl lakes crayfish reintroduction, Ballinamallard invasives project, dissolved oxygen investigations etc. EM encouraged all to consider responding to the second river basin planning consultation which closes on the 22 June 2013. **Action 3:** All to consider responding to the Consultation on Timetable and Work Programme for the Second Cycle River Basin Management plans 2015-2021 www.doeni.gov.uk/index/information/foi/recent-releases/publications-details.htm?docid=9042

A copy of the presentation is available at

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/erne_and_mevlin_catchment_stakeholders_group_catchment_officers_update_30th_may_2013.pdf

Discussion

A discussion took place on the changes in the status of waterbodies and the impact that diatom and fish monitoring have had in reducing the status of some waterbodies. AW explained that overall the water quality status had not changed but there had been increases and decreases in status in individual waterbodies. It was suggested that the influence of time of year when fish monitoring was conducted can be very important. AW status fish failures such as that in the Ballycassidy will be investigated. SH suggested that a more detailed update of a good status and poor status water bodies such as the Ballycassidy be given at the next CSG. **Action 4:** NIEA to provide a detailed update of the parameters monitored, issues of concern, projects etc within a good and poor status waterbody at the next CSG meeting.

GB asked if NIEA were reporting back to Europe on the 1st phase of river basin planning. AW replied that NIEA reported back to Europe in 2010 and they were relatively happy and had produced a list of UK wide questions and discussion where ongoing particularly in relation to monitoring and assessment methods.

RM stated the Ulster Angling Federation had made several suggestions to NIEA which were never taken up such as bailiffs taking samples for prosecution, increase in court fines to include river reinstatement costs, consent to discharge being linked to the planning process but these were not progressed. NH stated that the planning and consenting processes were linked and it was clearly stated that there was a requirement to have a consent to discharge before planning permission was given. The other issues raised had been considered by NIEA but would require changes in legislation.

RM also enquired if any progress has been made in relation to the P loading from the Republic of Ireland to the Erne system. AW stated that work was complex and ongoing and an update could be provided. **Action 5: NIEA to provide an update of the P loading from the Republic of Ireland to the Erne system.**

RM commented that the Local Management Area Action Plans did not have sufficient actions and will therefore not meet the 2015 targets. He also referred to the State of Nature 2013 report and suggested it did not bode well for the environment. AW acknowledged that there was still a lot of work needed to ensure good water quality and added that it was everyone's responsibility. EM added that local knowledge and input was essential and suggested stakeholders get involved in both practical projects through the NIEA grant or influence the river basin planning process by responding to the second cycle consultation.

Tea & Coffee

5. River Enhancement in the Garrison Catchment, Malcolm Finney, Garrison and Lough Melvin Anglers Association

MF introduced Lough Melvin and detailed the enhancement works completed as suggested in a report commissioned by Garrison & Lough Melvin Angler Association and produced by Ballinderry Fish Hatchery in 2004. The enhancement works included provision of groynes, blockage removal, trimming of overhanging branches, fencing, planting and the installation of water drinking points. MF explained the total project cost £357,065 and covered an area of 132,250 m² and the pay back period for the project was estimated to be around 5.4 years

The importance of the Melvin 4 day Open Championship was also highlighted with around 350 anglers attending last year, which provides a welcome boost to the local economy. Garrison and Lough Melvin Anglers Association have recently completed a new club house which enhances angling and tourism in the area. A copy of the presentation is available at

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/melvins_rocky_shore_presentation_by_malcolm_finney_erne_and_melvin_catchment_stakeholders_group_30th_may_2013.pdf

Discussion

CO'D asked if fracking was a water quality issue for the Melvin. MF replied was early days but it could endanger the Melvin and its spawning rivers however as Melvin is an ASSI and an SAC MF stated he didn't believe the authorities would risk it. AW asked if any works had been completed in the County River. MH replied that as this was a cross border river it sometimes proved difficult. There had been no enhancement completed on the northern side but the southern side may have put in a fish pass.

AOB

RM raised a specific query concerning the issuing of a consent to discharge for a building site which had been recently sold that is situated on a flood plain adjacent to a fishery. He

stated that DS was aware of the issue and he had also raised his concern with planning. As DS had left the meeting it was suggested the issue be passes to DS. **Action 6: DS to liaise with RM in relation to consent to discharge query.**

AM reminded those attending that there would be a consultation on Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) and encouraged everyone to response.

Close

Alvin thanked all the speakers and attendees for coming to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9:00pm.

Date of the next meeting - 7 November 2013.

