

## Lough Neagh & Lower Bann Advisory Committees

### Liaison Officer's Report – March 2006

1.	<p><u>Zebra Mussels in Lough Neagh</u> – (<i>LBAC Action 67 &amp; LNAC Action 62</i>) Zebra Mussels have now been found at Doss Point (1), Cranfield (6), McElroy's jetty (1), Gawley's Gate (8), Emerson's Quay (6), Kinnego (17), Coney (3) and Maghery (3).</p>
2.	<p><u>Lough Neagh Navigation Authority status</u> (<i>LNAC Action 34, 35 &amp; 36</i>) DCAL is unable to go to tender with regard to the preparation of the Economic Appraisal (EA) for the establishment of a Navigation Authority due to a lack of funds in this year's budget. The funding will hopefully be allocated in the 06-07 budget. DCAL has confirmed that there is no need for it to produce a Test of Likely Significance as there is no actual direct capital work as a result of the establishment of a navigation authority.</p>
3.	<p><u>LN Water Abstraction – Potential changes to abstraction locations</u> (<i>LNAC Action 37 &amp; 50</i>) Comments on the water abstraction proposals (project Alpha) lodged with PAC. Comments on the planning applications (4) for each abstraction plant site have been lodged with Planning Service. Comments mainly focused on improving opportunities in biodiversity terms and paying cognisance to built heritage. Comments on the second abstraction pipe at Castor Bay, mainly involved navigational issues. Letter of support for the isolation of sensitive wetland ecosystems from the water level management of Lough Neagh has been sent to RSPB.</p>
4.	<p><u>Water Level Management &amp; Hydrological Study</u> (<i>LNAC Action 49 &amp; LBAC Action 51 &amp; 52</i>) Rivers Agency &amp; the consultants carrying out the hydrological study on the system have agreed to make presentations to the Advisory and Management Committees in the week beginning 20<sup>th</sup> March.</p>
5.	<p><u>Local Biodiversity Action Plan</u> Biodiversity Officer working toward the preparation of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Steering Group has met twice and comprises over 15 representatives from stakeholder organisations. Two of a series of six workshops have taken place. The attendance has been impressive and some great locally based ideas are coming forward. An audit is being carried out on the habitats and species within the Lough Neagh Wetlands. EHS has agreed to facilitate a workshop focusing on the designation of Local Nature Reserves. This will be held in May and invites will be extended to local authorities and relevant interest groups. The Bio Officer is now co-ordinating the Tree Sparrow Project and Recording projects as well as researching potential biodiversity projects and giving advice to potential LNSF applicants. It would be appropriate to have an update from the Biodiversity Officer at the next LNAC meeting.</p>
6.	<p><u>Strategic Marketing of Lough Neagh</u> (<i>LNAC Action 40</i>) The consultants commissioned by the LNP are working up a draft marketing strategy for the Wetlands.</p>
7.	<p><u>Water Framework Directive</u> (<i>LBAC Action 63 &amp; LNAC Action 61</i>) The AC's comments on the Significant Water Management Issues Exercise were forwarded. A summary of the significant water management issues for each river basin district will be published in due course. Information on the WFD in NI can be found at</p>

	<a href="http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/environment/waterManage/wfd/public_partic.shtml">http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/environment/waterManage/wfd/public_partic.shtml</a>
8.	<u>Lough Neagh Resources (LNAC Action 42 &amp; 43)</u> Paper to be presented for the next meeting of the LNAC.
9.	<u>Sand Extractions and Implications for NI Industry - (LNAC 51, 52 &amp; 53)</u> The need for a comprehensive study into the local environmental and economic/social impacts of the Lough Neagh sand extraction industry and wider implications for NI was discussed at the last LN/LB MC meeting. The MC agreed that an appropriate initial step would be for QPANI to be asked to make a presentation to the LNAC in relation to current issues.
10.	<u>Maghery Canal &amp; Derrywarragh Bridge (LNAC Action 55 &amp; 56)</u> The letter was sent to the Minister highlighting concerns over the possible collapse of this project and the need for integrated action and partnership to get it back on track. At the MC, DCAL highlighted that additional funding had been secured and that the contractors were due on site on site in the very near future.
11.	<u>Lough Neagh Wetlands Baseline Study and GIS project</u> A draft of the baseline information has been supplied by the consultants and comments have been forwarded from the working group. Craigavon Borough Council has agreed to purchase the necessary software to run the GIS and house it in The Discovery Centre. The additional OSNI map tiles needed to operate the GIS will be paid for by the LNP. The LO is exploring the possibility of having the GIS system based in Sperrin House. Copies of the baseline data (paper and data discs) will be available to view Sperrin House from late Spring. The Baseline Document also incorporates a section on the implementation of the recommendations of LN Management Strategy. The general thrust within the draft is that the LNAC should allocate greater time to encouraging relevant agencies to implement the recommendations. The full report will be presented to the LNAC at a subsequent meeting.
12.	<u>Lough Neagh Wetlands Sustainable Recreation Framework</u> The consultants have done much of the background work on the preparation of this document, but are awaiting the map tiles from Craigavon BC before the data and recommendations can be presented in a meaningful manner.
13.	<u>Lough Neagh Partnership</u> Applications to the third round of the LNSF have been assessed and letters of offer will be issued early in March. There will be a call for biodiversity projects in late spring. The Biodiversity and Environment Officer is been offering advice to potential applicants. The Partnership has a sub group which is exploring the way forward for the organisation post this round of DARD funding.
14.	<u>Lough Neagh Tree Sparrow Project</u> Funding secured from LNP and Landfill tax credits, feeding and nest box sites being highlighted, practical work due to start in October 2006.
15.	<u>Lough Neagh Wetlands Wildlife Recording Project</u> Some funding has been secured by the LNAC towards the purchase of telescopes and digital photographic equipment to raise awareness and assist local groups to record species within the Wetlands. The match funding must now be secured.
16.	<u>Binevenagh AONB</u> A leaflet has been produced by EHS highlighting proposed changes to the North Derry AONB boundary. The proposal is to extend the boundary to cover Binenevagh Monutain and the Bann Estuary to the Cranagh. The consultation has been out since early January and

	the LO only received a copy on 21/02/06, by an indirect route. The final date for consultation is 28/02/06! I will endeavour to get an extension.
17.	<p><u>Lower Bann Partnership</u> Fund Manager, Jennifer Fulton and Administration Officer, Imelda Warnes, now in post in Office in Bellaghy. Formal applications for funding will be submitted in March and there will be an open call for the remaining funding in early summer. The LBAC will be submitting application for a Biodiversity Officer for the Lower Bann, the preparation of the LB Management Strategy, preparation of a navigation notes, etc. in March and may consider additional applications in the open call round.</p> <p>LBP has also submitted applications to the additional DRAD project call for water based recreational craft and to the Big Lottery Fund.</p> <p>LO still company secretary and liaising with manager in terms of project development.</p> <p>LO has offered services of environment representatives on LBAC to access project applications in terms of impact on the natural and built heritage.</p>
18.	<p><u>Rescue on Lower Bann (LBAC Action 47)</u> Press Release on protocol to be drafted for next edition of Eel Express. Safety &amp; Navigation Working Group to review current rescue procedures and comment as appropriate.</p>
19.	<p><u>Application to DARD Additional Call</u> LO, LNSF Manager, Brian Casells and Denzyl Dinsmore drafted and submitted an application to DARD for funding for the purchase of water based craft to be used on the system. To make the application fully sectoral, some parts of the project will be implemented in the Fermanagh lakes.</p>
20.	<p><u>Fallen Animals (LBAC Action 53, 54 &amp; 55)</u> Follow up letter sent to DARD. Management Committee unaware of existence of inter-departmental committee.</p>
21.	<p><u>Water Supply &amp; WWTW Presentations (LBAC Action 40 &amp; 42)</u> Water Service gave presentations on this subject and answered queries at the joint seminar on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2006. The following presentations were made: Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations (NI) 2002 Urban Waste Water Treatment Regs (NI) 1996, PPP Project Alpha (Water) Regulatory Compliance – Lough Neagh and Lower Bann and PPP Project Omega (Wastewater) Regulatory Compliance – Lough Neagh &amp; Lower Bann. Copies of the slides of these presentations are available from Sperrin House.</p>
22.	<p><u>Lower Bann Management Strategy &amp; Local Biodiversity Action Plan</u> Awaiting funding from LBP.</p>
23.	<p><u>Integrated Coastal Zone Management (Action LBAC 58)</u> Comments drafted and lodged with EPD.</p>
24.	<p><u>Castledawson to Randalstown Dualling (Action LBAC 64, 65 and 66)</u> Swan survey data still being collected and collated. The full report is anticipated in late Spring. The results will be brought to the Advisory Committees. Management Committee informed of LBAC's concern of continued expansion of road network rather than attention being paid to sustainable transport and of over emphasis on economic reasons and under emphasis on environmental reasons in making road alignment option decisions. Photographs of swans forwarded to Roads Service / consultants.</p>
25.	<p><u>High numbers of boats operating within designated zones (Action LBAC 61 &amp; 62)</u> Letters sent to BoBC and WI regarding the high numbers of craft operating at Drumaheglis. Ballymoney has had staff changes and letter has been passed to relevant staff. LO seeking</p>

	meeting asap.
26.	<u>Approval for Events on the River (Action LBAC 35)</u> Awaiting confirmation of approval process from WI to stage events on the River. And need for issuing of a Notice to Mariners.
27.	<u>Lower Bann Byelaws – (LBAC Action 59 &amp; 60)</u> WI's draft generic byelaws for the waterways within their jurisdiction are anticipated soon.
28.	<u>Northern Ireland Protected Areas Network</u> LO attends meetings – minutes available on request.
29.	<u>Oxford Island NNR Management Group</u> LO member of group. Currently reviewing 2006-2011 Management Plan for site.
30.	<u>Lough Neagh &amp; Lower Bann Management Committee</u> Met on 15 <sup>th</sup> Feb. Presentation by Matt Peach, Canoe Development Officer with CAAN & CANI on the development of canoe trails in NI. Copies of presentation available from Sperrin House.
31.	<u>Ramsar Boundary Review</u> Ramsar Bureau has reviewed criteria for changing boundaries – <i>“Ramsar site boundaries take into account water catchment planning issues. Thus, Ramsar sites may very well include parts of the landscape that are not wetlands (cf. Article 2.1 of the Convention). If you want to restrict RS boundaries, a Contracting Party has to provide reasons which override its earlier reasons for the earlier delineation. Simply local economic pressures are no reason to restrict a Ramsar site.”</i> Working Group to consider review in light of update and with EHS.
32.	<u>Wintering Duck Numbers Update (LNAC Action 60)</u> Presentation to be set up when update data is available.
33.	<u>Wetlands Wildfowling Committee</u> Meetings to be held with representative organisations in near future with a view to re-establishing the Wetlands Wildfowling Committee.
34.	<u>EU Eel Review - (LNAC Action 57, 58 &amp; 59)</u> Letter sent to DCAL seeking its views on the social implication of sustaining the LN eel fishery and the need for an eel Forum. No comment from DCAL as yet on the establishment of an eel Forum with representatives of all interested parties. DCAL has prepared a draft of Neagh Bann Management Plan which will be available for ACs comment in the near future. MC also to be invited to presentation.
35.	<u>Dredging on Lower Bann – (LBAC Action 56)</u> Waterways Ireland is submitting a background report to EHS highlighting its future work programme in relation to dredging the River from the access to Toome Canal to the Millennium Foot Bridge in Coleraine. The report highlights the intentions of WI, its understanding of the consents required and seeks clarification / consent to proceed with the urgent work and on an ‘as and when needed’ basis. The Management Committee agreed that a co-ordination meeting was needed and that the relevant EHS Officer was Conor McParland. WI indicated that it had been in consultation with Forestry Service regarding over hanging and broken trees that had fallen into the River. Liaison continues.
36.	<u>Camus Jetty - (LBAC 57)</u> Letter written to Coleraine Borough Council and Waterways Ireland in relation to the need for care and sensitivity when drafting development proposals for the Camus
37.	<u>Cut Over Bog Restoration</u> Continued interest in cut over bog restoration in south of Lough and Lough beg region.

	Hopefully projects will be ready to apply to the biodiversity call of the LNP.
38.	<u>EHS Funding (LBAC Action 44)</u> EHS has indicated that it hopes to be in a position to receive applications in Spring 2006. This will have implications for several of the highlighted Lower Bann projects and for potential Lough Neagh projects.
39.	<u>Live consultations</u> Binevenagh AONB – Consultation on Proposed Designation (proposed boundary extension to include Lower Bann Estuary) – 28 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2006 DARD’s Draft Rural Strategy – Consultation – 7 <sup>th</sup> April 2006
40.	<u>Northern Ireland Protected Areas Network</u> Liaising and commenting on NI wide issues – ICZM, review of access legislation, NP/AONB review etc.
41.	<u>Insurance for Advisory Committee members (LNAC Action 54)</u> This issue was again discussed at the LN/LB Management Committee. EHS does not have an insurance policy and therefore the ACs can not be covered by it. EHS will write a letter of comfort for the Committee members.
42.	<u>Travel Expenses (LNAC Action 45)</u> This issue was discussed again at the Management Committee. EHS do not pay travelling expenses to members of non-statutory committees. A decision by AC members to self allocate travelling expenses would be unadvisable.
43.	<u>Administration Officer</u> Rachel Forde started as Administration Officer on 16 <sup>th</sup> January 2006. Rachel has been employed to cover the period of Joanne McMullan’s maternity leave.

Caroline Marshall, Liaison Officer

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