

Minutes of the thirty-ninth meeting of the Lough Neagh Advisory Committee held on Wednesday 14 September 2005 at 10.00am in the Discovery Centre, Oxford Island.

Present

Prof Brian Wood
Mr John Scovell
Cllr Mary Baker
Cllr Walter Greer
Cllr John Smyth
Mr Billy Mullen
Mr Conor Corr
Mr C W Dickinson
Mr Brian Cassells
Mr Denzyl Dinsmore
Mr James Smyth
Alderman Sydney Anderson
Mr Ken Bell
Mr Conor Jordan
Mr Archie Gibson

In Attendance

Mr Stephen Foster
Ms Kathleen Conlon
Ms Caroline Marshall
Mr Seamus Burns
Mrs Joanne McMullan

Prof Wood welcomed committee members and thanked Craigavon Borough Council for the use of the Discovery Centre. He informed members that there would be a guided tour of the newly refurbished facilities at the end of the meeting. Alderman Sydney Anderson from Craigavon Borough Council extended a warm welcome to committee members.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Arthur Mitchell, Cllr Danny Kinahan (Antrim Borough Council), Alderman Cecil Calvert (Lisburn City Council) and Cllr Mark Russell (Craigavon Borough Council)

2. Chairman's Remarks

- a. A list of new members had been circulated to the committee members prior to the meeting. Prof Wood invited committee members to introduce themselves.
- b. A register of interests had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting. Prof Wood explained the need for such a register and asked that committee members complete the form and return it to Sperrin House as soon as possible.

3. Minutes of the last meeting – 1 June 2005

Mr James Smyth (Lough Neagh Fisherman Co-Op Society) felt that point 15 referred to the Lough Neagh Fisherman's Association instead of the Co-Op Society and requested that it be checked and changed if necessary.

Action 32: LO to check point 15 on minutes of 38th meeting with reference to letter on radar reflectors.

Mr Archie Gibson asked for an update regarding action point 24. Caroline read out the response received from the Departmental Solicitors Office. Mr Gibson was not entirely happy with the response and requested that a copy of the letter should be circulated to members.

Action 33: Letter from Departmental Solicitors Office to be circulated to members.

The minutes were then proposed by Mr Ken Bell and seconded by Mr James Smyth and agreed by members.

4. Matter Arising from last meeting

The meeting considered the following matters:

a. Navigation Authority for Lough Neagh

In reply to the LNAC's letter, relating to the establishment of a navigation authority, DCAL indicated that it is producing a Terms of Reference for an economic appraisal. Members agreed that a copy of the TOR should be requested and that members should comment on this as appropriate.

Action 34: LO to request Terms of Reference for Economic Appraisal for the establishment of a navigation authority and relay comments back to DCAL as appropriate.

Members welcomed the offer of a meeting with Dr McGinley, following the publication of the Economic appraisal.

Mr Billy Mullen highlighted the fact that a timescale had not been mentioned and stressed the importance of a navigation authority to be established for Lough Neagh. It was agreed that the LO would write to the Department requesting the timescale.

Action 35: LO to write to Department requesting timescale for the preparation of the economic appraisal in relation to the navigation authority.

After a discussion relating to the potential impacts of the establishment of a navigation authority on the Lough, it was agreed that the Management Committee should be asked to consider, and action as appropriate, the preparation of a Test of Likely Significance, so as to avoid unnecessary delays in the future.

Action 36: Management Committee to be asked to consider, and action as appropriate, the preparation of a Test of Likely Significance in relation to the establishment of a navigation authority.

Members once again highlighted the importance of a Navigational Authority for the Lough.

b. Water Abstraction on Lough Neagh

Prof Wood explained that a working group had met with a member of the Water Service to discuss the issue of reallocating the amount of water to be abstracted from Hog Park Point to other existing abstraction plants. There was a lengthy discussion regarding this

topic, including silver eel escapement and potential economic impacts of water level change. It was agreed to invite Ms Bryans, Chief Executive from the Water Service, to the next joint meeting of the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committees in December.

Action 37: LO to invite CE of Water Service to next joint Advisory Committee meeting in December.

Members also agreed that the issue of water level management should be revisited and that Rivers Agency should be asked to comment on current management practices and on any future plans to consider fine tuning current management.

Action 38: LO to ask Rivers Agency to comment on current management practices and on any future plans to consider fine tuning current management.

c. Lough Neagh Baseline Study and Recreational Framework

Caroline updated the committee on progress to date and explained the purpose of the study – to collate statistics relating to the Wetlands and to set out recommendations on the development and management of recreation. Members were informed that a draft report would come to the committee before it was finalised and that the SNWG would meet with Judith Annett, from the consulting team, in the next few weeks to discuss the water based issues. Caroline explained that it had been the intention to hold all the information obtained on GIS but the software and OSNI maps were proving to be very expensive. Alternative funding may have to be source.

5. Presentation on the Lough Neagh Wetlands Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Seamus Burns, Lough Neagh Wetlands Biodiversity and Environment Officer introduced himself and gave a presentation regarding his role. He will be involved in the preparation of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) for the Lough Neagh Wetlands, including Lough Beg. This document, steered by the LNAC, will highlight actions to help conserve species that are important locally, nationally and internationally. Seamus will also be involved in assisting to develop and implement biodiversity projects within the Wetlands. His post will last for three years. Seamus also provides advice to the Lough Neagh Partnership on environmental projects.

At the end of the presentation he passed round Steering Group models for the committee to consider. He informed the group that he would be writing out to members asking for comments on best way to proceed with establishing the Steering Group. He also informed the committee that a Local Biodiversity Forum was to be established and that he would be writing to the Lough Neagh Partnership and Lough Neagh Advisory Committee members asking for representation from key stakeholders. It is envisaged that this group would meet every six months. It was agreed that a copy of Seamus's presentation should be sent to all LNAC members.

Action 39: Copy of Seamus Burns's presentation to be sent to all LNAC members.

During the ensuing discussion, members highlighted the need for adequate representation from all stakeholders, including the fishing community, adequate funding for

implementation of the Biodiversity related recommendations and the need for political support for the successful preparation and delivery of the LBAP.

6. Liaison Officer's Report – September 2005

Caroline drew members' attention to the September 2005 report. In particular, the following:

a. Lough Neagh Partnership (item 12)

The third round of applications is now open until the end of October. If any one needed further information they should contact Gerry or Ben at the Partnership.

The LNP is seeking consultants to prepare a marketing strategy for the Wetlands. It was highlighted that the Wetlands may not be ready for a concerted marketing effort. It was agreed that Conor Corr should relay this comment to the LNP.

Action 40: Conor Corr to relay comment in relation to the Wetlands being ready for a strategic marketing plan to the LNP.

b. Water Framework Directive Forum – agenda items (item 33)

Caroline explained the background to the LNAC representation at the WFD Stakeholders forum and asked the members if they had any issues that they would like to highlight for the agenda. Following discussion, it was agreed that the economics of making money from water abstraction, lack of an incentive to save water and management of water levels should be highlighted as agenda items for subsequent WFD Forum meetings.

Action 41: LO to highlight the economic impacts of water abstraction, lack of an incentive to save water and water management as items for the WFD stakeholder forum agenda.

A lengthy discussion regarding the ownership of Lough Neagh followed. It was agreed that a meeting of the Working Group should be organised as soon as possible and that Archie Gibson should be added to the Working Group. This was proposed by Brian Cassells and agreed by Bobby Dickinson.

Action 42: LO to arrange meeting of Lough Neagh Resources Working Group as soon as possible.

It was also agreed that Billy Mullen, Archie Gibson and Brian Wood should request a meeting with the Minister to discuss water related issues.

Action 43: LO to organise meeting with Minister Hanson to discuss water related issues.

c. Nuisance High Hedges – draft comments (item 38)

Members were informed of the background and that comments would be lodged on this consultation document.

Action 44: Comments to be drafted and lodged on Nuisance High Hedges consultation.

- d. Environment NI Conference (item 43)
Caroline drew members' attention to the forth coming conference. Copies of the information leaflet were circulated.
- e. IWAI Conference (item 43)
Members were informed of the IWAI Conference. Copies of the information leaflet were circulated. It was agreed that Brian Wood would represent the Committee.
- f. Draft Planning (EIA) (Amendment) Regulations 2005 (item 44)
It was highlighted that this document related to public participation in the preparation of Environmental Impact assessments. Caroline informed the committee that she would be drafting comments and circulating to those who had expressed an interest.

7. Any Other Business

- a. Point 35 – Liaison Officer's Report – June 2005
Clarification was sought on point 35 regarding Travel Expenses. Caroline explained that no decision had yet been made and that the Management Committee met at the end of the month. There was a short discussion regarding travel payments to committee members, where members indicated strongly that payments should be made to individuals who represent organisations that have no access to such funds. It was agreed that Caroline would chase up this matter.

Action 45: LO to get decision regarding payment of travel expenses for committee members.

- b. Point 37 Liaison Officers Report – June 2005
The possibility of changing the name of Eel Express was discussed but it was agreed that no change was necessary.
- c. Maghery Canal
Caroline explained that she had attended a public meeting in August held by the South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association (SLNRA) where the need for dredging of the Maghery Canal was raised. SLNRA had sent a letter to DCAL requesting that the dredging take place, but had received a response saying that it was not DCAL's responsibility. During the ensuing discussion, it was agreed that a letter should be written to Dr McGinley highlighting the need for dredging of the Maghery Canal and in particular, highlighting the need for access to the Blackwater River for safety reasons.

Action 46: LO to write to Dr McGinley highlighting the need for dredging of the Maghery Canal.

Ms Kathleen Conlon updated the group on the Derrywarragh Bridge. Costs had escalated and a meeting was in hand to try and resolve outstanding issues. The members agreed to send a letter of support.

Action 47: LO to send letter of support in support of Derrywarragh Bridge to DCAL

- d. Insurance for Advisory Committee (Point 35 Liaison Officers Report – Sept 05)
Mr Archie Gibson highlighted that the following sentence should be inserted into the letter received from the Departmental Solicitor’s Office, “would in any event indemnify if any claims did arise.”

Action 48: LO to write to Dr Meharg, EHS, to request that EHS indemnifies Advisory Committee members, should the need arise.

- e. RAMSAR working group
Caroline informed members that a meeting of this group would be called in the next few weeks.
- f. Appointment of new chairman
Prof Wood reminded members that he would like to stand down as Chairman and asked that consideration be given to his successor at the next meeting.

8. Date and Venue of next meeting

Prof Wood explained that the next meeting would be a joint meeting between Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committees. It had been earlier agreed to invite Ms Bryans, Chief Executive of the Water Service to this meeting. Members also previously agreed that water quantity/water level management should be added to the agenda of this meeting.

Venue to be arranged.

Actions from Lough Neagh Advisory Committee meeting held on 14 September 2005

	Action	Implementer
32.	LO to check point 15 on minutes of 38 th meeting with reference to letter on radar reflectors.	Caroline Marshall
33.	Letter from Departmental Solicitors Office to be circulated to members.	Caroline Marshall
34.	LO to request Terms of Reference for Economic Appraisal into the establishment of a navigation authority and relay comment back to DCAL as appropriate	Caroline Marshall
35.	LO to write to Department requesting timescale for the preparation of the economic appraisal in relation to the navigation authority.	Caroline Marshall
36.	Management Committee to be asked to consider, and action as appropriate, the preparation of a Test of Likely Significance in relation to the establishment of a navigation authority.	Management Committee

37.	LO to invite CE of Water Service to next joint Advisory Committee meeting in December.	Caroline Marshall
38.	LO to ask Rivers Agency to comment on current management practices and on any future plans to consider fine tuning current management.	Caroline Marshall
39.	Copy of Seamus Burns's presentation to be sent to all LNAC members.	Seamus Burns
40.	Conor Corr to relay comment in relation to the Wetlands being ready for a strategic marketing plan to the LNP.	Conor Corr
41.	LO to highlight the economic impacts of water abstraction, lack of an incentive to save water and water management as items for the WFD stakeholder forum agenda.	Caroline Marshall
42.	LO to arrange meeting of Lough Neagh Resources Working Group as soon as possible.	Caroline Marshall
43.	LO to organise meeting with Minister Hanson to discuss water related issues.	Caroline Marshall
44.	Comments to be drafted and lodged on Nuisance High Hedges consultation.	Caroline Marshall
45.	LO to get decision regarding payment of travel expenses for committee members	Caroline Marshall
46.	LO to write to Dr McGinley highlighting the need for dredging of the Maghery Canal.	Caroline Marshall
47.	LO to send letter of support in support of Derrywarragh Bridge to DCAL	Caroline Marshall
48.	LO to write to Dr Meharg, EHS, to request that EHS indemnifies Advisory Committee members, should the need arise.	Caroline Marshall

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