

Rivers Directorate

Andrew McMurray MLA

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Department for Infrastructure

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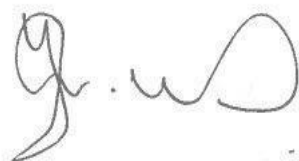
Email: rivers.registry@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Date: 14 November 2024

Dear Mr McMurray

DEPOSITING PAPERS CONCERNING AQW 17307/22-27

The Flood Strategy Steering Group (FSSG) minutes from the February 2024 and June 2024 meetings are deposited in the Assembly Library. The October minutes are still being agreed and will be deposited once finalised.


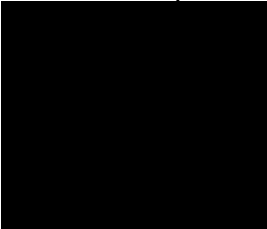

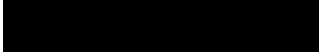
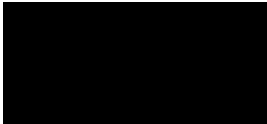
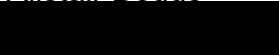


14/11/2024

Kind Regards

JOHN O'DOWD MLA

Minister for Infrastructure

Meeting:	Flood Strategy Steering Group Minutes (Incorporating Floods Directive)		
Location:	Teams	Date:	29/2/24
Present:	Gary Quinn James Kelly Seamus McCann Ciaran Fearon Violeta Morosan Colin Sykes  Siobhan Napier 	Rivers Directorate (chair) Rivers Directorate Rivers Directorate Rivers Directorate Rivers Directorate DfI TRAM Regional Officer Local Government LWWP DoF DfI Climate, Planning and Public Transport DfI CGEP NIFRS Belfast City Council TEO PSNI DAERA – NIEA Rivers Directorate (Minutes)	
Apologies:	Jonathan McKee  Beverly Cowan   Alistair Beags 	Rivers Directorate PSNI DfI Climate, Planning and Public Transport WDPD DfI CGEP NIW DAERA TRAM DfI Planning BCC	
Circulation:	As above		

1. Welcome/Introductions

Gary Quinn, Director of Rivers Operations and LWWP, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

3. Minutes of previous meeting on 28th September 2023

The minutes of the last meeting on 28th September 2023 were agreed and recorded as accurate.

4. Actions from previous meeting

A. TRAM to review signing at each “Ford” location.

CS noted this was ongoing with signs to be provided as appropriate. A further update to be given at next meeting.

B. All to ensure their organisation is familiar with the Reservoir Off-Site Plan

This plan is now hosted on RD and all agencies have access. Action is complete.

C. GQ and JR to liaise on the creation of a sub-group in relation to climate change and flooding.

On agenda

D. JK to provide update on Met Office Public Weather Service Customer Group (PWSCG) NI meeting.

Paper to be provided for circulation.

5. Recent Flood Events

SMcC noted that since the last meeting on 28 September 2023 it had been an extremely challenging time with the flooding during October/November 2023 of particular note. He advised that there was an ongoing review into this event, progressed by Jacobs, and which was due for completion at the end of June 2024.

Overall, from October 2023 to end February 2024 there were 45 weather warnings issued which included 18 Medium Impact Warnings, 1 High Impact Warning for Rain and 4 Amber Warnings which were for the flooding at Halloween, Storm Debi (Nov 2023) and Storm Isha - a high impact warning for Wind in January 2024.

In the aftermath of Storm Babet from 18th -20th October 2023 there were widespread impacts from flooding on 30th/31st October and through the first week of November 2023. Details will be included in the upcoming review, but some figures of note included:

- October 2023 was NI's fourth consecutive wet month with 168% of average rainfall and the fifth wettest October in a series from 1836.
- Counties Armagh (243%) and Down (246%) each recorded their wettest October on record with 230mm-260mm of rainfall.
- Trassey Slievenaman (County Down) recorded a monthly total of 517.6mm, more than three times the monthly average rainfall.
- At the start of November there was a warning for Storm Ciaran, but fortunately we missed the worst of the storm. Storm Debi on 13th

brought extensive wind impacts. Whilst very wet initially a much drier second half brought welcome respite, especially to the areas across the south-east of the Province affected by severe flooding following the exceptionally wet weather in October. The provisional rainfall total was 75% of average.

- From 30 October – 2 November 2023 over 2300 calls to the Flooding Incident Line
- For December 2023 although starting cold, frosty and mostly dry, after this it was dominated by a succession of Atlantic low-pressure systems which included three named storms in Elin and Fergus (9th and 10th) and Gerrit (27th). These brought very wet and windy weather with a monthly rainfall total was 170mm or 140% of average.
- January started off mild and showery but became much colder and dryer through the middle of the month. We had storms Henk (2nd), Isha and Jocelyn (21st to 24th). These brought very wet and windy weather, particularly Storm Isha. Rainfall totals were 75% of average.
- Storm Isha (Sunday 21 January 2024) brought widespread damage with gusts of 70-80mph resulting in widespread power outage and disruption followed by Storm Jocelyn (Tuesday 23 January 2024) which saw 50-60mph gusts generally and some and isolated 70mph gusts.

GQ thanked SMcC for this update which highlighted the extremely busy period for all those in response to these events. He noted the ongoing review which would cover all aspects of the Oct/Nov flooding from a prepare, response and recover viewpoint. He thanked all those multi-agency partners involved throughout this period.

██████ also noted the extremely difficult and challenging period, not just for all those involved in response, but also for those impacted by the flooding. She also felt that as part of any review we should, where possible, include the number of properties protected by the multi-agency response although she noted the difficulty around gathering this information.

Action: Include information on properties protected as part of flood review

6. Flooding Incident Line

██████ gave an update on the FIL and provided statistics from October 2023 to February 2024.

As noted previously he shared details of the extremely high volume of calls received in October & November 2023. He advised that throughout the period FIL continued to perform to a high level in terms of calls answered

with almost 98% of calls answered during the 2 months of October and November.

██████ noted the continued excellent communication process between the FRAs, DoF and SERCOs on-call manager which has helped maintain a high standard of performance, as well as the benefit of the weather warnings issued allowing the call centre to prepare accordingly with additional resources.

GQ thanked ██████ for his update and noted the period in Oct/Nov when calls were particularly high. He noted the difficulty when receiving calls, especially from residents who may be in distress, whilst advising there had been few complaints received to date in respect of the FIL. Again, it was noted that the FIL and its performance would be part of the overall ongoing review.

7. Water & Drainage Policy Update (to include Floods Directive)

WDPD had provided an update paper which had been circulated in advance of the meeting and which provided members with an update on progress on the Floods Directive requirements in respect of the next cycle of the Flood Risk Management Plan and a general update on water and drainage policy issues.

This paper provided updates on a number of key areas of work including Climate Change Allowances, Flood Storage Powers, and Reservoirs consultation. GQ noted this ongoing work and advised for any comments to be directed to WDPD or to be brought forward to be raised at the next meeting.

8. Climate Change

GQ noted there had been initial discussion on this area of work and it was felt that there were a number of working groups established in relation to flooding and climate change. Further discussion is required on a way forward which can be brought to the next meeting.

9. Planning Update

In his absence AB had provided a written update on the LDP programme highlighting some of the key areas. Any areas of concern could be highlighted directly with AB.

10. Reservoir Flood Risk

VM provided an update on reservoir flood risk noting the following:

- A reservoir flood risk remains in Northern Ireland to circa 83,000 people that live and work within the inundation areas of the 176

potential controlled reservoirs that we are aware of, in the absence of a reservoir's legislative framework. The full commencement of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 is being progressed by colleagues in WDPD

- Since 2016, the Department has continued to contact all potential reservoir managers on an annual basis to remind them of their common law responsibilities in relation to their reservoir.
- Interim measures in the absence of the Reservoirs Act are in place to consider public safety, when dealing with property developments within the inundation zones of controlled reservoirs.
- Rivers Directorate is now in a position to fulfil the legislative requirements that would be required in the early lifecycle of the Reservoirs Act, with work still ongoing to develop the full suite of processes and procedures required for the administration of the Act.
- The Department's own stock of controlled reservoirs has been reduced recently from seven to six controlled reservoirs, due to recommendations and works to one reservoir, Galwally Lake, where the reservoir's volume of water was reduced in the interest of safety. We continue to oversee a maintenance, inspection and supervision regime at all of our six controlled reservoirs, in line with the requirements of the Reservoirs Act.

GQ thanked Violeta for her update and noted the ongoing issues around reservoir safety given the lack of legislation.

JMcC also noted the fact the Off-Site plan has been established and again encouraged all partners to be aware of this plan. CF noted upcoming familiarisation exercises planned through the Flooding and Severer Weather Group.

11. Met Office Public Weather Service Customer Group (PWSCG)

JK note that NI facilitated meeting was held on 13th December 2023 at Stormont. He agreed to provide a paper for circulation to the group and encourage feedback to the PWSCG on Met Office performance to be directed through him as the NI rep on PWSCG.

12. UK Flood Hydrology Roadmap

No further update

13. Progress of Homeowner Flood Protection Scheme

SMcC gave an update on progress to date noting that 133 properties had been completed with a further 51 applications at various stages of the


process, including works ordered, offers made and a large number of new applications as a result of the recent flooding events.

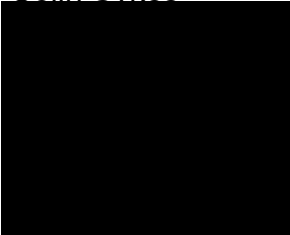


14. AOB

GQ outlined the wider context of the Flood Review noting it would be led by TEO with agencies responsible for their area of expertise providing input. It is intended to have stakeholder engagement days followed by an open day to launch the report. More details can be provided at the next meeting in June 2024

15. Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting is scheduled for 27th June 2024 via TEAMS.

	ACTION	ACTION BY	PROGRESS
A	TRAM to review signing at each "Ford" location. Western Review – additional signage	TRAM	C/F
B	GQ and JR to liaise on the creation of a sub-group in relation to climate change and flooding.	GQ/JR	On hold
C	Include information on properties protected as part of flood review.		

Meeting:	Flood Strategy Steering Group Minutes (Incorporating Floods Directive)		
Location:	Teams	Date:	27/6/24
Present:	Gary Quinn James Kelly Seamus McCann Violeta Morosan Colin Sykes  Jackie Robinson Ciaran Crosbie 	Rivers Directorate (chair) Rivers Directorate Rivers Directorate Rivers Directorate DfI TRAM Regional Officer Local Government LWWP DoF TEO PSNI BCC DfI Climate, Planning and Public Transport DfI CGEP DAERA WDPD Rivers Directorate (Minutes) Rivers Directorate (Minutes)	
Apologies:		DfI Climate, Planning and Public Transport DAERA – NIEA	
Circulation:	As above		

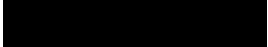
1. Welcome/Introductions

Gary Quinn, Director of Rivers Operations and LWWP, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

3. Minutes of previous meeting on 26th February 2024

The minutes of 26 February 2024 were discussed, with an amend noted to include  in attendance. All agreed and noted with this change the minutes recorded were accurate.

4. Actions from previous meeting

A. TRAM to review signing at each “Ford” location.

CS noted this had been completed with additional highlighting around signage introduced.

B. GQ and JR to liaise on the creation of a sub-group in relation to climate change and flooding.

It was agreed that this be removed from agenda due to recent changes. It was also agreed to note the evolution of this work through the LWW & Rivers team.

C. Provide information re: Properties protected as part of the Flooding Review.

█████ advised that Jacobs were provided information of properties that were protected. Agreed action complete.

D. DAERA to provide UFU contact details for Flooding Review.

█████ advised that this information has been provided, and action is now complete.

5. Recent Flood events

SMcC note that since the previous meeting in February there had been 17 weather warnings with 11 of those Medium Impact. Given the change to the protocol there was no requirement for LIACs for MI Thunderstorm warnings between May and September – unless specifically requested. It was noted that Storm Kathleen on 6 April was the most impactful event with 50-60mph winds and a highest recorded gust of 68mph in Bangor – the highest recorded for that site since 2008.

Overall rainfall figures fluctuated from the average with totals as below:

- Feb 92%
- March 149%
- April 141%
- May 63%
- Spring 119%

It was noted that Spring overall was wetter than average with 119% of average rainfall, with Co Down seeing 143% of average and the 3rd wettest March on record in Co Down with 145.9mm. It was also the 2nd warmest Spring since 1893.

GQ thanked SMcC for this update.

6. Flooding Incident line

█████ gave an update on the FIL and provided statistics on calls answered March 2024 to June 2024.

- March 2024 – 99.84%

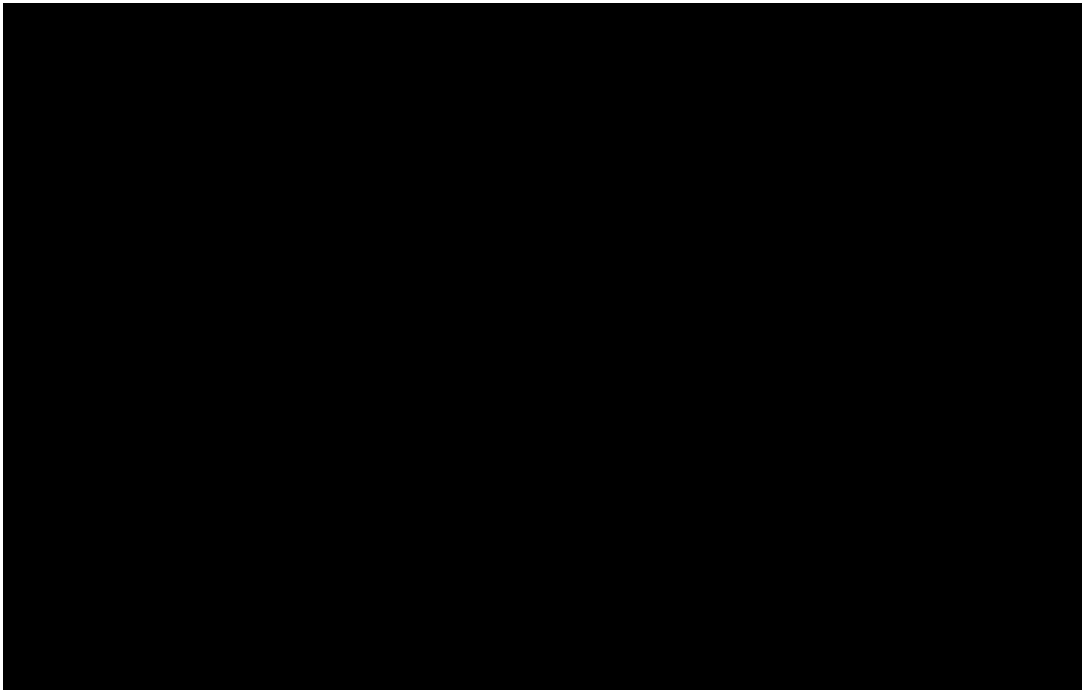
- April 2024 – 99.71%
- May 2024 – 99.62%
- June 2024 – 100%

██████ noted that given there were no severe weather events calls were more easily managed and it was noted that the SLAs were met with over 99% calls answered. He noted the regular meeting with representatives of the FRAs and indicated plans to review the call scripts. It was also noted the need to have the Stress Test held over the coming weeks.

GQ thanked ██████ and highlighted the reduction of average call numbers for this time of year in comparison to the flooding event in the Autumn.

7. Overview of Cross Border Project “Build Back Better”

██████ advised that PDFs were circulated (or would be at a later date) for ee’s and she discussed the proposal in detail.



Action: ██████ to request participation from members for the round-table discussions for Build Back Better for November 2024 meeting.

8. Water & Drainage Policy Update (to include Floods Directive)

██████ had provided a paper prior to the meeting which outlined work to date and future direction. She requested that any comments could be directed to her for clarification. The group were content with this paper with GQ noting the work around Reservoir Legislation. He advised it was hoped to discuss this at a future Committee meeting in September 2024 with a view to addressing Reservoirs Legislation and Policy.

9. Climate Change Update

GQ advised that he was content on how CC was being addressed by the LWWP team and there was no need to establish a separate working group for this issue. This had been an action from a previous meeting.

█ note that the CC mitigation measures were primarily transport which was not what the CC Act focussed on. He noted that the LWWP team have been feeding into JRs team around the 3 main water related areas.

█ noted she was content with these established links and how it is reported back through the FSSG meetings.

Action: Amend agenda to “Climate Change Update” with █ in the lead

10. Planning Update

Carried forward to next meeting as no update provided.

11. Reservoir Flood Risk

GQ noted the importance of reservoir safety and advised that the Reservoirs Act was a priority for progress in early September 2024 after summer recess.

VM provided a summary of progress noting the following:

Future administration of the Reservoirs Act

A meeting was held with the Minister and WDPD colleagues on 16 May, where the further commencement of the Reservoirs Act (NI) 2015 was discussed. At this meeting, the Minister decided to:

- Progress with the five pieces of legislation to further commence the Act now.
- Progress with the grant scheme which is to be means tested, and also allow for the first inspection and supervision costs to be included in the grant; and
- In parallel, consult on the remaining sections of the Reservoirs Act.

Dfl along with WDPD colleagues are to provide an update to the Committee for Infrastructure in early autumn.

Once the Act is further commenced, a dedicated team within Rivers Directorate will act as the Reservoirs Authority and will have the power to enforce the Act and regulate for reservoir safety here.

To date, a suite of draft processes and procedures has been developed for the early stages of the Act being further commenced, but further refinement will be required as the Act comes into effect. These processes and procedures cover the following key elements of the Act:

- Reservoir Registration.
- Reservoir Consequence Designation.
- Appointment of Supervising Engineer.
- Appointment of Inspecting Engineer.

Work is currently underway to establish a Reservoir Designation Panel. This will allow Reservoirs to be designated as High, Medium, or Low consequence once they are being registered with the Department.

A communication plan will be developed in due course to inform the reservoir managers and the wider industry of the further commencement of the Reservoirs Act (NI) 2015.

Communications are ongoing with NI Water, as the largest Reservoir Manager in NI.

A delegation from Rivers Directorate visited our counterpart colleagues in the Environment Agency, England to get an overview of how they administer their Reservoirs Act (1975).

Reservoirs Operations

At present the Department is the reservoir manager or part reservoir manager for six controlled reservoirs. A series of flood and option studies have been commissioned, with one still outstanding for Culcavy Ponds. We hope to be in a position to take forward the recommendations within these reports with our consulting partner, Amey/JBA.

GQ thanked Violetta for this comprehensive update noting the considerable work that had already been done in this field and the progress made.

12. Met Office Public Weather Service Customer Group (PWSCG)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

13. UK Flood Hydrology Roadmap

GQ noted that details of the 25-year Road Map plan is available to view online, and that it is heavily scientific based. He noted that there are many agencies involved including the Environment Agency (EA), National Resource Wales (NRW) and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). The working group is at an early stage of developing a more consistent approach to this area of work as there are many different methods used. Several bodies have been set up to discuss how to go forward and GQ will inform the group as and when important updates are released.

14. Progress of Homeowner Flood Protection Scheme

SMcC gave an update on progress to date noting that work on 136 properties had been completed with some recent completions to be wet tested. GQ advised that there were ongoing discussions around the HFPGS to see if the application process could be more streamlined and the criteria simplified. This was to be part of the ongoing flood review.

15. AOB

Autumn 2023 Flood Review

GQ outlined the wider context of the Flooding Review noting it would be looking at the causes of flooding across the South and East and how the information could be used to feed into local feasibility studies and future actions. It was based on the current British Standard in relation to technical aspects and from a multi-agency perspective along the themes of Prepare, Respond, Recover.

He noted the work already completed through the stakeholder engagement and the open days now taking place in each of the areas on 26, 27 and 28 June which would allow for any further feedback to be collected.

At these Open Evenings in Portadown, Downpatrick and Newry, there will be a presentation from Jacobs with representatives from Council, Rivers, the insurance industry, FloodRe and other multi-agency partners to allow for any discussion as required.

After the open days the next stage is to finalise recommendations to be delivered with the aim to have the final report published early in July. He advised that a sub-group of FSSG would be established to determine ownership and governance around the recommendations and this will be led by James Kelly.

Action: Establish sub-group of FSSG members to progress ownership of recommendations.

