


Date	Signed by Chairman
4 th February 2026	

**Minutes of 185th Meeting of The Drainage Council Northern Ireland
09:30am Friday 09th May 2025**

Members Present:	DFI Officials & Guests in Attendance:
Mr Alan Strong (Chair) Mrs Wendy Elliott (Tourism specialist) Mrs Maureen Brunt (Agriculture specialist) Mr Peter Archdale (Conservation specialist) Cllr Robert Irvine Cllr Gareth Sharvin Cllr Mervyn Storey Cllr Michael Goodman Cllr Keith Kerrigan Cllr Pete Wray	Mr Gary Quinn (Acting Director of Rivers Operations) Mrs Mary McCann (Secretary) Mr Niall Shivers (Rivers Directorate) Mr Mike O’Gorman (Rivers Directorate) Mr Nick Gregg (Rivers Directorate) Miss Louise Mailey (Rivers) (Minutes) Arlene Fiorentini (Rivers Directorate) Kathryn McFerran
Apologies Cllr Callum Bowsie Cllr Dermot Nicholl Cllr Cathal Gallagher	Did Not Attend Cllr Phillip Campbell

1. Introduction

The Chair opened the 185th meeting of the Drainage Council NI, welcoming all attendees, particularly new councillor members who had recently taken up their post. He noted the council’s strong geographical representation.

Following introductions, he acknowledged the resignations of Alderman Julie Middleton and Cathal Gallagher (Fisheries specialist). Maureen Brunt also informed the Chair of the requirement for her to step down at the end of her term.

2. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

Chair advised apologies had been received from Cllr Callum Bowsie, Cllr Dermot Nicholl and Cathal Gallagher. .

No Conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Election of Vice Chair

Chair welcomed nominations.

Robert Irvine nominated **Peter Archdale**.

Maureen Brunt seconded the nomination.

No further nominations were received, and it was agreed that **Peter Archdale** was elected as Vice Chair.

4. Minutes of 184th Meeting

Chair thanked **Secretary** for production of comprehensive minutes and asked members if they were content that the minutes provided an accurate record. Minutes were accepted.

5. Matters Arising from Minutes of 184th Meeting.

Action Point 1

Rivers to keep a record of lessons learned.

This action is complete.

Secretary advised that Rivers maintains a register of lessons learned and plans to hold a workshop on this in the future.

Peter Archdale suggested minutes should be time-bound and a progress report provided, or outcomes shared.

Gary Quinn advised that he would take this on board but stressed that it is an internal matter.

Action Point 2

Rivers to create a process map for major schemes.

This action is ongoing.

Gary Quinn provided an update. He advised that work is ongoing with the Rivers capital project team and that process maps are being developed. He agreed with the Chair's suggestion that the finalised processes would be shared with Drainage Council members.

Wendy Elliott suggested creating an issues/risk log and this was accepted by Council

Action Point 3

Secretary to send out a list of Regional Community Resilience Groups (RCRG's) to new members.

This action is complete.

Gary Quinn provided a brief overview of the functions of Regional Community Resilience Groups (RCRGs). He reported that 50 RCRG's are now active and doing valuable work. He provided an update on the development of the Flood Forecasting Centre and noted that emergency flood response is primarily the responsibility of the

Department for Infrastructure (Dfi) with local councils and multi-agency partners in a supporting role. He advised that this joint approach to flood emergencies works extremely well here, and it was proposed to present this process to a Parliamentary Excellence grouping within the Assembly. He also advised that additional community resilience flooding officers to assist councils during flooding events, would be piloted to improve communications.

Chair noted the work of these groups aligns well with council efforts and encouraged councillors to engage with their communities.

Pete Wray noted the importance of educating councils, as responses to flooding events are often reactive.

Gareth Sharvin queried the governance and funding for these new roles. Gary responded that the Department for Communities (DfC) are responsible to funding LG resilience but that the pilot would be funded by Dfi .

Chair asked about progress on meeting The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP). **Gary Quinn** suggested that their current focus is on Lough Neagh and more general NI environmental issues, but in time they are likely to review Rivers.

[Action Point 4](#)

Secretary to seek clarification from Sophie Mathews regarding her comment that “HRA does not fall under the remit of The Drainage Council”.

This action is complete. Secretary provided an update on reply received from Sophie Mathews.

Peter Archdale suggested a process map as Drainage Council cannot sign off on something if they do not understand the process.

[Action Point 5](#)

Rivers to provide update on policy of 100-year flood maps.

This action is complete.

Gary Quinn provided an update on CP09 and CP18.

Chair gave members an explanation of a 1 in 100-year flooding event.

Robert Irvine and **Gareth Sharvin** commented on the importance of accurate flood maps in relation to each councils Local Development Plans (LDP's).

Chair asked about the progress of the Flood Forecasting Centre. **Gary Quinn** provided a brief overview for members and advised that the Drainage Council will be updated as and when further information becomes available.

Action Point 6

Secretary to consider the inclusion of photographs / visual representation in future booklets to allow members to make better informed decisions in relation to designation recommendations.

This action is complete.

Action Point 7

Secretary to issue report to councils (with comment from Drainage Council supporting the report and recommendations) with a note to emphasise while the Report has "South- East" in the title, it is for the consideration of all regions.

This action is complete.

Action Point 8

Chair to consider the creation of a sub-group to organise a Nature-based Solutions (NbS) seminar.

This action is ongoing.

Chair provided an update, meeting with Rivers Trust, workshop to take place early autumn.

Maureen Brunt stated that she would like to be informed and included in this.

Action Point 9

Secretary to ask Rivers Environmental Team for an update on Flap Valves and provide to members.

This action is complete - Secretary provided members with a verbal update.

Carried forward Actions

CF Action Point 1 (182nd Meeting)

Chair to liaise with Flood Re and arrange a suitable date for them to attend a future Drainage Council meeting.

This action is ongoing - Chair advised that Flood Re were unavailable to attend today's meeting but are willing to attend a future meeting.

CF Action Point 2 (182nd Meeting)

Gary Quinn to arrange an invitation to The Office of Environmental Protection to attend a future meeting of Drainage Council.

This action is ongoing - Gary Quinn advised that Rivers Current focus is on a range of Flood Risk Management initiatives as well as the development of essential flood alleviation schemes across a number of areas.

C/F Action Point 3 (182nd Meeting)

Secretary to keep in mind the timing of the next invitation to the Permanent Secretary.

This action is ongoing – Chair and Gary Quinn will consider the appropriate timing of a further invitation to the Permanent Secretary.

C/F Action Point 4 (183rd Meeting)

Rivers Capital Projects Unit to share the Contract Management Plan with EH for any comments.

This action is ongoing - It will not be completed until a contractor has been appointed.

C/F Action Point 5 (183rd Meeting)

Cathal Gallagher to provide Rivers with examples of 'No Net Loss' projects that he has previously been involved in.

This action is complete – Cathal has provided details which have been shared with rivers staff.

C/F Action Point 6 (183rd Meeting)

Rivers to review 'Nil response' wording for any future consultation processes.

This action is ongoing - This will be addressed through further consultations.

C/F Action Point 7 (183rd Meeting)

Rivers to share list of consultees with Drainage Council.

This action is ongoing - Secretary will circulate after list has been updated to address above.

C/F Action Point 8 (183rd Meeting)

Rivers to forward Peter Archdale's comments in relation to the seed mix to NIEA, seek their input and share this with Mr Archdale.

This action is ongoing – Landscaping plans have been updated, and native seed mixes are now proposed. The proposed seed mixes have been shared with NIEA for their review and comment. Peter Archdale and all members will be notified when a response has been received from NIEA.

Actions arising from this discussion: -

Action	Description	Responsible
1.	<i>Secretary to maintain an issues log to track outstanding actions, with each action assigned a specific timeframe for resolution.</i>	Gary Quinn
2.	<i>Secretary to share Flooding Review email/webinar with new Drainage Council members to raise awareness in their respective councils.</i>	Secretary
3.	<i>Secretary to share outputs from the Parliamentary Excellence presentation when available.</i>	Secretary
4.	<i>Secretary to share list of Regional Community Resilience Groups (RGRG's) with all new members.</i>	Secretary
5.	<i>Secretary to share process map for schemes, (once developed) with Drainage Council members and coordinate training session on EIA function.</i>	Secretary
6.	<i>Gary Quinn to keep members updated on flood forecasting centre progress.</i>	Gary Quinn
7.	<i>Gary Quinn to consider inviting Drainage Council members to climate change conference.</i>	Gary Quinn
8.	<i>Peter Archdale to send Gauge-Adjusted Radar information links to Gary Quinn.</i>	Peter Archdale
9.	<i>Chair to organise workshop with Mark Horton (NbS) in early autumn and also include Maureen Brunt.</i>	Secretary
10.	<i>Secretary to share NIEA's response in relation to the seed mix for Portadown Flood Alleviation Scheme with Peter Archdale once this has been returned to Rivers Capital Project team.</i>	Secretary

6. Rivers Environmental approach and Annual Maintenance Programme for 2025-26.

Chair invited **Arlene Fiorentini** to deliver presentation on Rivers Environmental approach and Annual Maintenance Programme for 2025-26.

Chair asked if the presentation could be shared with all members.

Gary Quinn highlighted the valuable contribution of the Rivers Environmental teams, particularly in their critical role of scrutinising the activities undertaken by Rivers staff.

Maureen Brunt asked for a copy of the Rivers Biosecurity guidance.

Peter Archdale emphasised the importance of detecting invasive species at an early stage.

Michael Goodman queried the frequency of inspections on designated watercourses. **Nick Gregg** replied that Rivers operate a rolling programme of planned inspections to assess the condition of these watercourses. The frequency of inspections is not fixed but is based on this rolling programme.

Actions arising from this discussion: -

Action	Description	Responsible
11.	Secretary to send copy of Rivers Annual Maintenance Programme 2025–26 presentation to all members.	Secretary
12.	Rivers to share Biosecurity guidance with Drainage Council.	Secretary

7. **Mike O’Gorman** provided an update on the Living With Water Programme and presented an overview of leaky dam proposals at selected sites in Eglinton and Belfast. He advised members: -

- The Department is leading on the development of a Living With Water in Derry Plan, to help protect against flooding, enhance the environment, and support economic growth.
- The draft Living With Water in Derry Plan was published for a 12-week public consultation on Monday 13 January 2025.
- This strategic draft plan details the drainage and wastewater issues identified during the stakeholder engagement process as well as the potential opportunities for solutions to these issues. It promotes collaborative working on infrastructure upgrades and the development of nature-based drainage and natural flood management solutions. This includes using green spaces to store surface water and slow the flow of water into the rivers or sewers to reduce flood risk and sewage spills.
- It is anticipated that the final Plan will be published by the end of 2025.

Mike O’ Gorman advised that a designation for part of Muff River will be requested in due course.

Gary Quinn provided further information for new members on the work of the Living With Water philosophy.

Maureen Brunt supported the idea, saying it would benefit farmers.

Keith Kerrigan asked how success is measured and **Mervyn Storey** asked about the costs involved.

Gary Quinn stated that a review has not been completed yet, and that we needed to take a ‘no regrets’ approach to developing these nature-based schemes so that we could learn from these and that currently Rivers would rely on the expertise of its partner consultant and would follow similar well tested UK models to achieve the best value for money.

Mike O’Gorman confirmed that Rivers will take on maintenance responsibility once works have been completed.

Robert Irvine raised concerns about the use of telegraph poles in leaky dam construction and the potential for river side spill.

Gary Quinn responded that telegraph poles are robust, but we would give further thought to this suggestion. He confirmed the dams would be inspected and maintained at least annually.

8. Minor Works for information

Nick Gregg listed the minor works and gave a brief description of each.

Chair inquired whether the works would be undertaken internally or outsourced.

Nick Gregg confirmed that the works would mainly be carried out internally.

Peter Archdale asked if location links could be included in any future Minor Works for information.

Actions arising from this discussion: -

Action	Description	Responsible
13.	<i>Secretary to include location links with Minor Works for information to make this more accessible for members.</i>	Secretary

9. Correspondence

Secretary provided information on correspondence issued since the last meeting of Drainage Council.

10.AOB

Chair proposed that Drainage Council write to David Porter to congratulate him on becoming President of ICE and request that he keeps rivers informed from an international perspective.

Gary Quinn highlighted the excellent work being carried out by Rivers to develop their Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) and informed members of a recent Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) award received in recognition of their efforts.

Gary Quinn confirmed that appointment of new specialist members was still ongoing.

Gary Quinn provided an overview of the updated Rivers Directorate staffing structure, outlining the position of the Living With Water programme within it.

Chair thanked all attendees for their contributions and suggested that letters of appreciation be sent to those who have resigned and also those who are due to step down in June 2025.

Gary Quinn delivered a speech in honour of the Chair, expressing sincere gratitude for his outstanding dedication and commitment throughout his tenure on the council. He commended the Chair's significant contributions and the positive impact of his service.

Actions arising from this discussion: -

Action	Description	Responsible
14.	<i>Secretary to write to David Porter congratulating him on becoming ICE President.</i>	Secretary
15.	<i>Secretary to share Assembly briefing links for reservoirs with members.</i>	Secretary

Chair confirmed the next meeting will be in Autumn with the exact date to be confirmed.

Meeting ended.