

DATE	SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN
27-7-17	

**MINUTES OF 164th MEETING OF THE DRAINAGE COUNCIL FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND HELD AT 10:00am  
ON THURSDAY, 23 JUNE 2016  
AT THE SEAGOE HOTEL, CRAIGAVON**

**Members Present:**

Mr Alan Strong (Chairman)  
Councillor Brian Harvey (Vice  
Chairman)  
Mr David Porter (Chief Executive  
Rivers Agency)

Councillor Bernice Swift  
Councillor Billy Webb  
Councillor Beth Adger  
Mr Phillip McGowan (DfI strategic  
Planning)  
Dr Bernie Lafferty  
Mr Andrew Wilson  
Mr Brendan Kerr

**Apologies:**

Councillor Graham Craig  
Councillor Cadogan Enright  
Councillor Jim Fletcher  
Alderman Samuel Cole

**RA Officials In Attendance:**

Mr Shaun Donnelly (Secretary)  
Mr Owen McGivern (Head of Operations  
Rivers Agency)  
Mr Austin Brown (Minutes)  
Mrs Rhonda McCann (Administration)  
Ms Linda MacHugh (DfI Observer)

## **1. Introduction**

**Chairman Alan Strong** opened the meeting and welcomed all those present in particular Ms Linda MacHugh from the Department for Infrastructure Water and Drainage Policy Unit as an observer to the 164<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Drainage Council for Northern Ireland.

**Councilor Billy Webb** – congratulated the chair on his recent MBE, chair reciprocated on Councilor Webb's award.

**The Chairman** advised the Council that item 7 on the agenda (Flood Review) will be moved to the end of the meeting.

**David Porter** informed the Council that Rivers Agency had recently won the Northern Ireland Civil Service, Customer Service Award for its work during the winter flooding. Council also added their congratulations.

**The Chairman** then asked David Porter to provide an update on the new Department for Infrastructure and the impact it was having on the functions of Rivers Agency.

**David Porter** explained to the Council that as part of the 'Fresh Start' Agreement, Rivers Agency was part of the new Department for Infrastructure (DfI) along with functions from the former Department for Regional Development (DRD), the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) – Vehicle Regulation from the former Department of the Environment (DOE), Road Safety and Strategic Planning (DOE), Waterways Ireland from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and the Crumlin Road Gaol from OFMDFM.

**David Porter** continued to explain that, although there was increased responsibility and exposure to change, Rivers Agency was well equipped to deal with the challenge. Mr Porter also pointed out that he had responsibility for the Agency's operational side and that Linda MacHugh now had responsibility for Flood policy.

**The Chairman** thanked Mr Porter for his update and asked members for any questions – no questions.

**The Chairman** then invited the **Secretary**, Mr Shaun Donnelly, to offer any apologies that had been received.

## **2. Apologies**

**Mr Donnelly** advised that apologies had been received from Councillor G Craig, Councillor C Enright, Councillor J Fletcher and Alderman S Cole.

## **3. MINUTES OF 163rd MEETING**

**The Chairman** asked if members agreed that the minutes of the last meeting were an accurate record. Two minor amendments were raised, Cllr B Swift clarified her title under the list of apologies and it was noted that Mr David Porter is also a member of the Drainage Council and should be shown as such.

Minutes Agreed.

## **4. Matters Arising from Minutes**

The **Secretary** confirmed correspondence had been issued in line with matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

The presentation on cost benefit analysis of drainage schemes to be deferred until the next meeting due to high volume of business – The Chairman Agreed.

The venue for Drainage Council meetings to be included with invite letter. Mr Andrew Wilson requested that postcodes also be included for Sat-Nav purposes. The **Secretary** agreed to action the request.

## 5. Flood Report

**David Porter** provided an update to the Council on flooding events since the last meeting. The winter storms caused flooding to large areas of land around both Loughs, causing disruption to local residents and businesses, with Clady in West Tyrone being badly affected by flooding from the River Finn. Mr Porter stated that very high water levels had been recorded in both Lough Erne and Lough Neagh during the winter storms of late 2015 and early 2016. The value of our Flood Maps was made clear to the Council as in general only those areas predicted to be at risk of flooding on the Agency's mapping system actually flooded, with the exception of the Linen Green shopping complex in Dungannon which flooded as a result of a blocked grille.

**Mr Porter** continued by showing photographs from the Clady area which showed a large section of the flood defences that had failed during the event. Initial repairs have been completed and a prefeasibility study was underway which includes an initial calculation of the cost benefit of a scheme to increase the standard of protection.

**Dr Bernie Lafferty** asked if consideration was given to flood risk during the planning process.

**David Porter** explained that flood risk is integrated into the planning process in PPS15 and that Rivers Agency is a consultee within this process.

**Dr Lafferty** followed up by asking about site specific data being available to the Agency in respect of a flood defence scheme.

**Owen McGivern** responded that site specific data was used when assessing the flood risk to property, but there had to be a positive cost benefit scheme for it to be included in a construction programme. **David Porter** explained further using the example of a single dwelling in a flood risk area requiring a large flood defence not having a positive

cost benefit, in comparison to a major housing development requiring reinforced banking to provide 1 in 100yr protection.

**Dr Lafferty** enquired about the management of flood forums and what considerations were taken into account.

**David Porter** invited Linda MacHugh to explain the current policy thinking.

**Ms MacHugh** proceeded to outline the current long term approach towards water strategy which is now under a single unit in DfI.

**The Chairman** thanked Ms MacHugh for her clarification.

**David Porter** returned to the high water levels recorded in Lough Erne and reminded members that this was a North/South issue with water levels in the Lough managed at the hydro power station at Cliff in the Republic of Ireland. This process arises from a legal agreement laid down in legislation which dates back to the 1950's.

**Mr Andrew Wilson** asked if the flooding in the upper Lough could have been reduced by the opening of the flood gates both in Enniskillen and at Cliff.

**David Porter** clarified that there are no flood gates at Enniskillen but a barrage which is operated in low water conditions. The water being allowed to pass through Cliff was at its maximum level, but the amount of water entering the Lough exceeds the amount that is possible to discharge from the Lough.

Mr Porter stated that unfortunately there is no viable or environmentally acceptable solution which is cost beneficial to reduce the flood risk on the upper Lough as the flooding is large scale and not routine.

**The Chairman** questioned what the costs would be to alleviate the bottle neck that is the inter-Lough channel at Enniskillen.

**David Porter** explained the engineering works that would be required to alleviate the situation with the estimated costs to complete such works running into hundreds of

£millions. Council were also told that there was extensive flooding of agricultural land around upper Lough Erne and the Share Centre was also significantly affected.

**Mr Andrew Wilson** raised the health and safety aspects for isolated communities and the financial impacts on those communities.

**The Chairman** remarked that open discussion was good with points well made, but that issues need to be raised at local level and that engagement with all agencies is vital.

**David Porter** continued by explaining that with Lough Neagh, there had been many attempts to control the water levels commencing in 1858. Mr Porter stated that there were six river systems discharging into Lough Neagh, but only the Lower Bann exiting which made managing levels during high rain fall difficult. It was pointed out that the Met Office can only give 2-3 days notice of heavy rain falls, with flooding today having a greater impact on communities than previously.

**The Chairman** thanked Mr Porter for his presentation and asked for any questions or comment.

**Councillor Beth Adger** asked for a copy of the presentation. AP 1 Secretariat to issue.

**Councillor Bernice Swift** commented that it was good to see all agencies responsible for flooding working together making residents more aware of their own responsibility, but also suggested that future investment needed to be looked at.

**The Chairman** raised the use of social media/apps to explain the message of flooding, its impact and the use of individual flood protection. The Chairman then moved that the Council should show its appreciation in regards to the award recently received for customer service excellence by Rivers Agency, stating he would write to David Porter asking for the letter to be issued to all RA staff.

**Councillor Bernice Swift** thanked and acknowledged the input provided by Mr Porter.

The Chairman referred Members to the designation of watercourses section in the booklet and invited Mr Owen McGivern to address the Council.

## **6. Designation of Watercourse**

**Donnygowen, Burn (adjacent to Urney Road), Clady, Strabane.**

Owen McGivern explained the proposal in accordance with the paper in the booklet. On the proposal of Cllr B Webb seconded by Cllr B Swift, the Council agreed to the designation of the watercourse.

**Killypaddy Drain (Branch A) Drumhaw, Lisnaskea.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet. On the proposal of Mr A Wilson seconded by Cllr B Swift, the Council agreed to the designation of the watercourse.

## **7. Designation of Watercourse and Scheme recommended for Acceptance**

**Glenveigh Drain, Altnaveigh, Newry.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet. On the proposal of Cllr B Webb seconded by Cllr B Swift, the Council agreed the designation and the scheme should be accepted.

**Ecclesville Drain, Drainage Scheme, Fintona.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet. On the proposal of Cllr B Swift seconded by Mr B Kerr, the Council agreed the designation and the scheme should be accepted.

**Drumhaw Urban Drain, Drumhaw, Lisnaskea.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet. On the proposal of Cllr B Swift seconded by Mr A Wilson, the Council agreed the designation and the scheme should be accepted.

**Abbeyfields, Chapel Road, Dungiven.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet. On the proposal of Mr B Kerr seconded by Dr B Lafferty, the Council agreed the designation and the scheme should be accepted.

**8. Watercourses which the Department is not prepared to recommend for Designation**

**Bradoge River Belleek.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet, and the Council agreed that the designation should not be accepted.

**Termon River Tullyhommon Co Fermanagh.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet, and the Council agreed that the designation should not be accepted.

**Tircur Burn, Dunbreen, Omagh.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet, and the Council agreed that the designation should not be accepted.

**Upper Reach of U3702 (Glas-na-Braden Glengormley).**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet, and the Council agreed that the designation should not be accepted.

Councillor Billy Webb did not agree with this decision and wanted this formally recorded.



**U3125 Kilkeel Harbour River, Kilkeel.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet, the Council agreed that the designation should not be accepted.

**9. Emergency Works**

**Semicock Road Tributary (U2707) Ballymoney.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet, that the Council notes these works for information.

**Lifford Road, Strabane.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet, that the Council notes these works for information.

**Clady Village and Breach repairs on River Finn from Clady to Strabane.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet, the Council notes these works for information.

**10. Scheme Recommended for Acceptance.**

**Longfield Sea Defence, Station Road, Eglinton.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet. On the proposal of Cllr B Webb seconded by Dr B Lafferty, the Council agreed the scheme should be accepted.

**Fairhill Stream, Fairhill Street, Ballycastle.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet. On the proposal of Mr B Kerr seconded by Dr B Lafferty, the Council agreed the scheme should be accepted.

## **Drumrainey Minor, Drumkeen, Ballinamallard.**

Owen McGivern recommended in accordance with the paper in the booklet. On the proposal of Cllr B Swift seconded by Mr A Wilson, the Council agreed the scheme should be accepted.

### **11. Flood Review**

**Mr Alan Strong (Chairman)** informed the Council that the then Agriculture Minister, Michelle O'Neill MLA, had requested him, in his capacity as Chair of the Drainage Council, to carry out an Independent Review of Winter Flooding 2015/16 His report was to be evidence based and would include as many stakeholders as possible. Alan made a brief presentation on the Review structure and gave early indications of emerging themes. Drainage Council members discussed some of the issues surrounding this flood event and were given the opportunity to submit written evidence directly to Alan.

### **12. AOB**

### **13. Date and location for next meeting – To be advised**

#### **Site Visit**

Members visited Rivers Agency offices in Craigavon for a demonstration of the individual property flood protection test area.