

Consultation Document

Timetable and Work Programme for making a River Basin Management Plan for the Shannon International River Basin District In Ireland

22nd June 2006

This document is prepared and published in accordance with Article 14.1.a of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), and Article 14.1.a of the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722 of 2003)

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Local authorities in the Shannon region are working together and with others to prepare a River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) in relation to the Shannon International River Basin District (IRBD) by mid-2009. Consultation with interested parties is an intrinsic part of this process. Public consultation will take place at a number of different stages. This document sets out the steps which will be taken by the constituent local authorities in the Shannon IRBD, namely Cavan, Clare, Cork, Galway, Kerry, Laois, Leitrim, Limerick, Longford, Mayo, Meath, Offaly, Roscommon, Sligo, North Tipperary, South Tipperary, Westmeath County Councils and Limerick City Council, acting jointly, leading up to the making of the first River Basin Management Plan for the Shannon International River Basin in 2009. It also asks for your comments in relation to the proposed timetable and work programme leading to the making of a river basin management plan in 2009 for the purposes of the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

This document is prepared and published in accordance with Article 14.1.a of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), and Article 14.1.a of the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722 of 2003).

WHY, WHO, WHAT, HOW, WHEN, WHERE?

WHY?

Why am I being consulted?

You are being consulted for many reasons. In addition to your right to be consulted, you are being consulted because implementation of the WFD might affect you. In order to protect our waters, we may have to change the way we do certain things. For example, we may have to change the way we treat our waste water, or from where we get our drinking water, where we locate our industry or roads, or how we use our fertilisers. This consultation is focused on the timetable, work programme and statement of consultation measures set out below. At a future date we will be initiating public consultation on how we can better manage our waters.

WHO?

Who is this consultation aimed at?

We want to hear from anyone who cares about waters and our aquatic environments. We especially want to hear from people and organizations who will be affected by decisions on how we use and protect waters. You may use water in industry, in agriculture, or for recreational purposes, such as fishing or boating.

WHAT?

What is the Water Framework Directive?

The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), or WFD, is a European Union law designed to protect and improve the quality of all waters throughout the European Union. This includes all waters in Ireland - rivers, lakes and estuaries as well as groundwater and coastal waters up to one nautical mile from the shore. Under the WFD, the quality of water in a particular river, lake, coastal or ground water will be assessed on the natural plant and animal life it supports. The quantity of water will also play a part in the assessment of a water body's status. WFD sets two main targets:

- (1) To prevent any deterioration in any waters;
- (2) To reach at least good ecological status for all waters by 2015.

What are the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722 of 2003)?

The European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722 of 2003) transpose the WFD into Irish law. This means they take all the rules and obligations in the WFD, and give them effect in Irish law.

What is a River Basin District?

A river basin district is an area of land that is drained by a large river or number of rivers and the adjacent estuarine/coastal areas.

The Shannon IRBD is the largest river basin district in Ireland, comprising a land area of approximately 18,000 km² and almost 1,500 km of coastal waters. It stretches from the source of the R. Shannon in the Cuilcagh mountains in County Cavan to the tip of the Dingle peninsula in north Kerry. As well as the natural drainage basin of the Shannon river itself, which drains an extensive area of central Ireland it also includes groundwaters and coastal parts of Clare, Kerry and Limerick which drain to the sea but are adjacent to the Shannon river or the Shannon estuary. It flows through 18 local authority areas and is also an international RBD as a small portion of county Fermanagh in NI drains underground to where the source of the Shannon rises in Co. Cavan.

What is the River Basin Management Plan?

A Management Plan for each River Basin District is required under the WFD. This plan, the River Basin Management Plan, must give details of all the water bodies in a River Basin, the environmental objectives established for those water bodies and the measures that will be adopted to achieve those objectives. It must be produced by 22 June 2009. This document spells out the steps that will be taken to arrive at that plan.

What am I being consulted on?

For now, you are being consulted on the timetable, work programme and statement of consultation measures set out in this document. There will be further consultation at a later date on changes in the way we manage water in Ireland.

HOW?

How will the WFD protect and improve the quality of our waters?

WFD works on the basis Think-Plan-Act-Review. For the last number of years, scientists all over Ireland have been working to answer questions like: What fish and plant life should an unpolluted river or lake have? What are the main pressures on our waters? How does taking water from a river for drinking affect the river? How does pollution from industry, agriculture, septic tanks or sewage treatment plants affect our water?

When these questions have been answered, when we understand what is affecting our waters and how, the next phase is to plan how we are going to deal with these problems. The steps that we plan to take in this planning process are laid out in the section "WORK PROGRAMME".

WHEN?

When will all this happen?

A lot has been done already. This includes the establishment in 2003 of the River Basin Districts that will form the geographical and administrative areas for management of our waters. These districts have been prepared in conjunction with the relevant authorities in Northern Ireland, having regard to the extent of our shared waters. In 2005, a first major inventory, in the form of a Characterisation Report, was prepared in relation to the waters in each RBD. Other significant developments take place in the current year (2006). An Advisory Council has been established in each RBD to provide a structured forum for promoting the involvement of interested parties. The Key Dates in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in Ireland are as follows:

By 22 June 2006 –

- Publication of a timetable and work programme leading to the making of River Basin Management Plans in 2009. This document fulfils this objective;
- Preparation and publication by the EPA of a monitoring programme for all waters. Provision is made for comments by interested parties. Achievement of this task is on schedule;

- Preparation by the EPA of a classification system in relation to the status of waters. This task will be completed in part but will need further development;

By 22 December 2006, the monitoring programme is to be made operational;

By 22 June 2007 – publication of an overview of significant water management issues, to be followed by a period of at least 6 months for public consultation;

By 22 June 2008 – publication of a draft River Basin Management Plan, to be followed by a period of at least 6 months for public consultation;

By 22 June 2009 – publication of a River Basin Management Plan.

WHERE?

Where can I get more information?

General information on the Water Framework Directive (WFD) is set out below. More specific information in relation to the Shannon RBD can be obtained from:

Enda Thompson
Limerick County Council
Shannon River Basin District
Mulkear House
Units 2/3
Newtown Centre
Annacotty
Co. Limerick
Tel: 061 337914
Email: info@shannonrbd.com
Website: www.shannonrbd.com.

Further information on the WFD in Ireland can be obtained from:
Water Quality Section
Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Custom House
Dublin 1
Tel: 1890 20 20 21
Website: www.wfdireland.ie

Where can I send my submission?

If you have any comments on this document or its contents, you should send them to Enda Thompson, by email or post, to above address before 22nd December 2006.

WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

GENERAL INFORMATION

The protection and improvement of water quality in Ireland will in future be co-ordinated on the basis of the areas known as river basin districts, established for the purposes of the EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC).

The Water Framework Directive, or WFD, came into force on 22 December 2000 and established a new, strengthened system for the protection and improvement of water quality and water-dependent ecosystems. It provides for co-ordinated water quality management based on natural river basins (i.e. catchments). It aims at preventing any deterioration in the status of any waters and at achieving at least “good status” for all waters by 2015. The status of waters will be determined by chemical and ecological criteria for surface waters and chemical and quantitative criteria for groundwaters. It requires the carrying out of numerous preparatory tasks leading to the adoption by December 2009 of river basin management plans and their implementation, review and updating on a six-year cycle.

The Water Policy Regulations, together with the corresponding legislation for Northern Ireland, established a total of eight RBDs in relation to the island of Ireland in accordance with the proposals set out in the joint North / South consultation paper “Managing Our Shared Waters” (March 2003). One of these RBDs is situated wholly in Northern Ireland, four are situated wholly in the Republic of Ireland and three relate to cross-border areas and are known as International River Basin Districts (IRBDs). The eight RBDs are –

- the Eastern RBD
- the South Eastern RBD
- the South Western RBD
- the Western RBD
- the North Western IRBD
- the North Eastern RBD (NI)
- the Neagh Bann IRBD
- the Shannon IRBD.

While responsibility for implementation of the Directive lies with the relevant public authorities it is Government policy, in accordance with the Directive, to encourage the active participation of all interested parties. This paper has been prepared for the purposes of providing information on the necessary preparatory tasks leading up to the formulation of River Basin Management Plans, and affording all interested parties the opportunity to comment.

Northern Ireland and Cross-border Waters

Authorities in Ireland and Northern Ireland are co-ordinating their activities for the implementation of the WFD in relation to shared river basins. This current consultation paper relates to WFD implementation in Ireland. A separate document will be issued later in 2006 by the competent authorities in Northern Ireland.

The North West, Shannon and Neagh Bann IRBDs are International River Basin Districts in which waters, and their related catchments, are shared by Ireland and Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland, the Department of the Environment has overall responsibility for implementation of the Water Framework Directive: the Department's Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) is the key Competent Authority which is taking forward the process of river basin management planning. The Department will be producing draft timetables and work programmes for production of River Basin Management Plans later in 2006. Further details of how the Directive is being implemented in Northern Ireland, and information on how stakeholders can become involved in the process, can be accessed at the EHS website:

<http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/environment/waterManage/wfd/wfd.shtml>

TIMETABLE

The Key Dates in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in Ireland are as follows:

By 22 June 2006 –

- Publication of a timetable and work programme leading to the making of River Basin Management Plans in 2009. This document fulfils this objective;
- Preparation and publication by the EPA of a monitoring programme for all waters. Provision is made for comments by interested parties. Achievement of this task is on schedule;
- Preparation by the EPA of a classification system in relation to the status of waters. This task will be completed in part but will need further development;

By 22 December 2006, the monitoring programme is to be fully operational;

By 22 June 2007 – publication of an overview of significant water management issues, to be followed by a period of at least 6 months for public consultation;

By 22 June 2008 – publication of a draft River Basin Management Plan, to be followed by a period of at least 6 months for public consultation;

By 22 June 2009 – publication of a River Basin Management Plan.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Flow Chart overleaf is a graphical representation of the various work elements leading up to the production of the first River Basin Management Plan in 2009.

The Characterisation of water bodies, which was completed in 2005, identified all the water bodies in the state and described their basic characteristics. It identified the water bodies that are at risk of failing to meet the water quality and quantity objectives of the WFD by the target date of 2015. It also identified the main pressures causing those water bodies to be so at risk.

Further studies are now ongoing with the intention of establishing how those pressures cause changes in water quality and what can be done to prevent such changes. The results of these studies will feed directly into the Report on Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI Report), which is due to be published by 22 June 2007. Other work elements that will feed into the SWMI Report include a preliminary cost-effectiveness analysis of the economic impact of likely measures, and a review of existing water quality legislation.

The SWMI Report will provide an early overview of what the implications of the Water Framework Directive are for Ireland and for each River Basin District. It will be a key step in the development of Programmes of Measures (POMs). These measures will be the instruments through which the WFD will deliver on its water quality targets. They might include, for example, further implementation of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and the implementation of the Nitrates Regulations.

Following the publication of the SWMI Report, there will be a period of 6 months of public consultation. This public consultation, will feed into the development of a Draft River Basin Management Plan, which must be published by 22 June 2008. The Draft River Basin Management Plan will detail initial thinking on what Programme of Measures might be appropriate to a River Basin District, and how it might be implemented.

Following the publication of the Draft River Basin Management Plan, there will be a further period of 6 months of public consultation in order to allow stakeholders an input into the finalisation of the first River Basin Management Plan in 2009.

2
0
0
5

Characterisation
of water bodies

2
0
0
6

Publication of
classification
system

Publication of
monitoring
programme

Studies of main
pressures affecting
Irish waters, identified
during characterisation
studies

Publication of
timetable and work
programme leading
to Draft River Basin
Management Plan

Economics

2
0
0
7

Report on Significant Water
Management Issues

Public
consultation

2
0
0
8

Public
consultation

Draft River Basin Management Plan
including environmental objectives and
programmes of measures

2
0
0
9

Public
consultation

River Basin Management Plan

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEASURES TO BE TAKEN

Both the Water Framework Directive itself and the Irish legislation which transposes it place emphasis on public participation. Throughout the period leading up to the publication of the first River Basin Management Plans in 2009, public consultation will be encouraged. On an ongoing basis, public participation is being facilitated by the existence of River Basin District Advisory Councils in each River Basin District. The River Basin District Advisory Councils consist of elected local representatives (County Councillors and Town Councillors) along with representatives of stakeholder interests such as farming, angling, non-governmental organisations and industry.

The publication of the Overview of Significant Water Management Issues report (by end June 2007) and of the Draft River Basin Management Plan (by end June 2008) will be followed by a public consultation period of at least 6 months. During these periods, public consultation will be facilitated by the following measures:

1) Written Consultation

When the Overview of Significant Water Management Issues report and the Draft River Basin Management Plan are published, notices will be placed in relevant media, indicating where copies of the documents may be obtained and inviting written submissions on these;

2) Internet

When the Overview of Significant Water Management Issues report and the Draft River Basin Management Plan are published, they will be presented on the Shannon RBD website, www.shannonrbd.com and on the websites of the 18 constituent local authorities for the Shannon RBD.

3) River Basin District Advisory Councils

When the Overview of Significant Water Management Issues report and the Draft River Basin Management Plan are published, they will be disseminated through the Shannon River Basin District Advisory Council to the represented stakeholders, with an invitation to those stakeholders to submit observations to the relevant competent authorities within the specified time period.

Public consultation may also take place either in conjunction with the above measures or separately from them, where such consultation is called for under Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (the SEA Directive) or under the Regulatory Impact Assessment process.

RETURN FORM

Name:

Organisation (if relevant):

Address:

Telephone:

Is it daytime or evening?

Mobile phone:

Fax:

Email:

Website:

Do you have any comments on the timetable, work programme or statement of consultation measures? (Please use extra pages if required)

Please return by email or post to Enda Thompson before 22nd December 2006 (contact details on pg. 5).

Additional feedback

We would appreciate if you would take a few moments to complete the questions below in order to inform our future consultation methods

1a Which is the most effective way for you to find out about public events and consultation processes ?

Please rate in order of preference

- Newspaper article in national newspapers
- National Radio
- Newspaper article local press
- Local radio
- Web site
- Other Please specify.....

1b Which method of communication would you choose to receive detailed information on water issues and WFD?

Please rate in order of preference

- Public meeting
- Word of mouth
- Trade/professional press
- DVD
- Workshop in your locality
- Television programme
- Radio programme
- Website
- Printed document
- Other Please specify.....

1c Where did you find out about this consultation process?

- Public notice in national newspapers
- Web site
- Word of mouth
- Direct mail

1d Have you been involved in any other consultation process on the WFD?

YES NO

1e If yes, please specify.....

2a Do you use this web site www.wfdireland.ie ?

YES NO

2b If yes - how frequently?

once, daily, weekly, monthly

2c Do you have any comments on its contents?

3a Do you use the Shannon River Basin District website www.shannonrbd.com

YES NO

3b How frequently?

once, daily, weekly, monthly

3c Do you have any comments on their contents?

Finally, other than as a consumer, what interest in water do you have?

Your co-operation in taking the time to complete this questionnaire is much appreciated. Please return by email or post to Enda Thompson (contact details on pg. 5).