

**Minutes of Special Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Mtek Building, Armagh Road, Monaghan on Monday 15 February, 2010 at 10.00 a.m.**

**Chair:** Cllr H. Humphreys, Mayor.

**Present:** Cllrs. Bannigan, Carthy, Carville, Conlon, Connolly, Coyle, Crowe, Gallagher, Keelan, Maxwell, McElvaney, B. McKenna, S. McKenna, McNally, Murray, O'Brien, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.

Mr. D. Nelson, County Manager, Mr. P. Clifford, Mr. D. Fallon, Directors of Service, Mr. A. Hughes, Senior Planner, Mr. T. Gourley, Senior Executive Planner, Ms. S. Clerkin, Heritage Officer, Mr. M. Murray and Mr. J. McGrath Senior Engineers, Mr. A. Hall and Mr. D. McKernan, Area Engineers and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

**1. Briefing on Neagh Bann/North Western River Basin Management Plans:**

Mr. D. Fallon, Director of Services advised the Council that the River Basin Management Plan is required under the EU Water Framework Directive. It aims to protect and improve surface waters and groundwater so that people, plants and animals that depend on waters can use them in a sustainable way. It takes a catchment wide approach so that all activities with a potential to impact on waters are managed in an integrated manner. There are eight river basin districts covering the island of Ireland. County Monaghan is covered by both the Neagh/Bann and the North Western River Basin Districts. The adoption of the draft Plans is a reserved function of the Council. The Plans must be submitted to the EU in 2010 and will remain in place until 2015.

Mr. Fallon then introduced Dr. Tony McNally, Project Co-ordinator, Ms. Grace Glasgow and Mr. Mark Magee from the North South Share River Basin Management Project.

Dr. Tony McNally thanked the Council for the opportunity to address it. He outlined the background to the Water Framework Directive. He stated that in response to the increasing threat of pollution and the increasing demand from the public for cleaner rivers, lakes and beaches, the EU has developed the Water Framework Directive (WFD). This Directive is unique in that, for the first time, it establishes a framework for the protection of all waters including rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater, and their dependent wildlife/habitats under one piece of environmental legislation. Specifically the WFD aims to:

- protect/enhance all waters (surface, ground and coastal waters)
- achieve "good status" for all waters by December 2015
- manage water bodies based on river basins (or catchments)
- involve the public
- streamline legislation

The Directive states that water quality management be centered on river basins, which are natural geographical areas that occur in the landscape. Management of these basins will be achieved through management plans, a plan being created for each River Basin District. "Characterisation Reports" must be in place for every River Basin District. The reports give an account of each basin, including

the pressures and impacts caused by humans. The report is necessary to work out whether such effects are likely to inhibit the accomplishment of good status.

The scientific assessment of the river basin that is contained in the Characterisation Report is vital for the production of the "Programme of Measures". The Programme of Measures consists of policies and strategies, such as monitoring programmes, that are intended to reduce the risk to water bodies and allow them to attain good status.

Dr. McNally then asked Grace Glasgow to brief the members in relation to the RBM Plans.

In her presentation Ms. Glasgow outlined the following.

**The River Basin Management Plan identifies the following –**

- the pressures on waters,
- the status of waters,
- the objectives (what and when targets are to be achieved) and
- the measures to be taken to achieve the objectives

The layout of the plans are as follows

Executive summary

1. Introduction
2. Description of the North Western IRBD/Neagh Bann IRBD
3. The status of the waters of the North Western IRBD/Neagh Bann IRBD
4. The objectives for the North Western IRBD/Neagh Bann IRBD
5. The programme of measures for the North Western IRBD/Neagh Bann IRBD
6. Integrating plans and programmes.

She then explained in detail, to the members, the information contained in the plan under the headings listed above.

Mr. Mark Magee then briefed the members on the Water Management Unit Action Plans of which there are five within Co. Monaghan – Blackwater, Fane, Glyde, (Neagh Bann) Erne East and Woodford (North Western). Mr. Magee outlined the Glyde WMU in details to the members.

Following the presentations Dr. McNally, Ms. Glasgow and Mr. Magee responded to queries from the members.

The Mayor thanked all three for attending the meeting and for their informative presentation.

It was agreed that the Draft River Basin Management Plans will be placed on the agenda for the April Council meeting.

2. **To consider draft submission on Eirgrid Strategic Infrastructure Development application:**

Mr. A. Hughes, Senior Planner referred to the draft submission from Monaghan County Council to An Bord Pleanála in accordance with Section 182A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006, copy of which

had been circulated to the members in advance of the meeting. He stated that the document is a technical assessment of the planning application which has been undertaken by the Planning, Heritage, Roads, Environment and Environmental Health sections of the Council. There is provision for comments from the elected members to be added following this meeting. The Planning Authority is bound to restrict its comments to proper planning and sustainable development. The submission must be forwarded to An Bord Pleanála by 12th March, 2010. The Bord may ask the applicant for further information and if this information is significant then a further three weeks public consultation will be required. He stated that it is likely that the Bord will hold an oral hearing in the matter.

Mr. T. Gourley, Senior Executive Planner briefed the members in relation to the following

- 2.0 Technical assessment
- 2.1 Principle of proposal
- 2.2 Consideration of alternatives
- 2.3 Impact upon landscape heritage
- 2.4 Impact upon areas of primary and secondary amenity
- 2.5 Impact upon views and prospects
- 2.6 Impact upon lakes and their environs
- 2.7 Impact upon trees and hedgerows
- 2.11 Visual impact of towers
- 2.12 Noise
- 2.13 Impact upon existing and permitted development
- 2.16 General development contributions
- 2.17 Special development contributions
- 2.18 Community gain fund
- 2.19 General comments
- 2.20 Major incident provisions.

Ms. S. Clerkin, Heritage Officer outlined the following –

- 2.8 Impact upon bio diversity
- 2.9 Impact upon Architectural and Built heritage
- 2.10 Impact upon Archaeology

Mr. J. McGrath, Senior Engineer Roads outlined the following –

- 2.14 Impact upon roads

Mr. M. Murray, Senior Engineer Environment outlined the following –

- 2.15 Impact upon surface and groundwater

The Mayor thanked the officials for their reports and the members complimented them for the quality of the draft submission.draft submission.

The members put forward the following comments for consideration.

- That a section be added documenting the impact of the project on tourism in the county. A Bord Failte study in 2007 referred to the fact that 80% of visitors to Ireland cited the scenic aspect of the Irish landscape as the reason

for the visit. 47% stated that the erection of steel pylons would be a distraction from the tourism aspect. There are a number of tourist attractions that powerline goes very close to – ie Lough Mourne shooting range and riding school at Lough Egish

- There is no reference in any strategy or plan that states these powerlines have to go overground. There is no effort to balance local interests with the national perspectives.
- HSE - requires that power lines minimise any potential impact on persons living, working close to the line. Places of habitation and employment need to be marked on the maps.
- Houses constructed since 2005 are not marked on the maps accompanying the application. A number of applications for planning have been granted along the route – no recognition has been given for these.
- 44 metre high pylons cannot be hidden on a drumlin landscape – pylons cant be located lower down the drumlins as the lines wouldnt cross over the drumlins.
- Impact of development is always stated as being low
- There is not enough information to make a proper assessment. If an application with the equivalent lack of information were made to Monaghan County Council it would be refused.
- No zones of visual impact assessment included
- Photomontage is inadequate
- Trees have been inserted into photographs than don't exist.
- This type of development is not possible without huge visual impact.
- Insufficient information given in relation to lakes – Lough Mourne is a fishing lake and there is a 43 metre high tower located in the vicinity of the lake. At the lowest point of the lake seven towers are visible in the distance.
- Lemgare, Lough Egish and Corduff are critical points where elevated ground is crossed.
- Application states that there was no access to lands to carry out study – Eirgrid were not refused access everywhere – they didnt look for access even in areas where there might not have been opposition.
- Roads – haul routes stop short of the tower sites in a number of locations.
- Route taken through Monaghan not properly assessed. Selected on the basis that it was between Moy and Kingscourt.
- Eirgrid application is of no benefit to Co. Monaghan – the only area in the north east where there may be a definite shortage of supply is Navan.
- Unspoilt landscape of Monaghan and Cavan mentioned in Lonely Planet Guide. Scenery is important to tourists.
- Not enough research done on alternatives - Ecofys report recommends undergrounding of pylons. Has cost of undergrounding been fully considered?
- Insufficient consideration of ecological impacts
- Micro siting of pylons – should EIS cover additional 40 metres either side of route corridor.
- Detailed traffic management plans should be sought.
- Proposals for dealing with spoil from excavation of tower sites. Greater consideration needs to be given to the excavated spoil and waste generated during construction, and the impact of its transportation over local roads
- If undergrounding is not the way forward, the Council is entitled to development contribution of €200,000 per pylon – the county will be split in two by these pylons.

