

The Council also has the opportunity to see the Rivers Agency operations at first hand during site visits, and to have any drainage question referred to it investigated.

4 What is expected of the Drainage Council?

The Drainage Council is charged with ensuring the impartial and uniform application of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's drainage function and achieving value for money in public expenditure on drainage.

5 What standards are required of individual members?

Members of the Drainage Council must be committed to the principles and values of public service and perform their duties with integrity.

6 Is the Drainage Council accountable for its decisions?

Council decisions on designation or de-designation of watercourses are open to review by the Lands Tribunal on appeal by any aggrieved party. The Drainage Council Secretariat will notify all landowners affected by a Drainage Council decision to

de-designate a watercourse. Landowners have a right of appeal to the Lands Tribunal within 28 days of notification.

7 Does the public have access to Drainage Council?

Recommendations for designation / de-designation of a watercourse may be put forward to the Drainage Council by any member of the public as well as by the Rivers Agency or Government Departments.

8 How can the Drainage Council be contacted?

Any correspondence to the Drainage Council should be sent to:

**The Secretary, c/o Rivers Agency
4 Hospital Road, Hydebank
Belfast BT8 8JP**

Telephone: 028 9025 3357

DARD Textphone: 028 9052 4420

Web: www.riversagency.ni.gov.uk/about/drainagecouncil.htm

Copies of this document can be made available on request in alternative formats e.g. in large print, Braille disc, audio cassette and other languages.

9 Drainage Council Members 2006-2009



From left to right

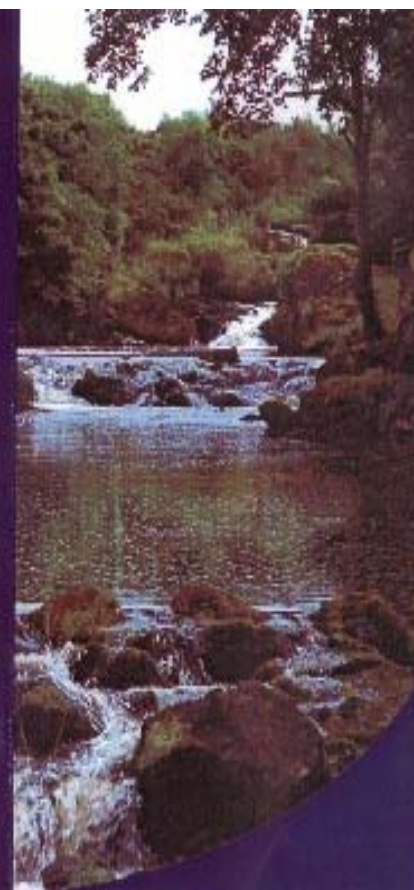
Front row: Councillor Catherine McCambridge, Moyie District Council; Dr Alexandra McGee, representing conservation interests; Alderman Hubert Nichol (Vice-Chairman), Ballymena Borough Council; Mr Gerald Crawford (Chairman), representing fisheries interests; Councillor William King MBE, Coleraine Borough Council.

Middle row: Councillor Michael Gillespie, Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council; Councillor Jim McNair, Ards Borough Council; Dr Harold Johnston, drainage specialist; Mr Robert Cummings, representing agricultural interests; Councillor Gerry McHugh, Finneragh District Council; Alderman Roy Beggs, Larne Borough Council.

Back row: Mr Gareth Boyd, representing industrial interests; Councillor Alan Graham, North Down Borough Council; Councillor Oliver Hughes, Magherafelt District Council.

Not pictured: Mr John Hagan, Chief Executive, Rivers Agency; Mr Pat McBride, Director of Operations, DCE Planning Service; Alderman Edwin Poole, Lurgan Borough Council; Miss Janice Gault, representing tourism interests.

028 9025 3357 Cover Photograph: River Bush



Your
Guide to the
Drainage Council
for Northern Ireland

Your Guide to the Drainage Council for Northern Ireland

1 What is the Drainage Council?

The Drainage Council is an independent advisory body with 18 members who are appointed by the Minister with responsibility for agriculture and rural development to oversee the programme of publicly funded drainage and flood defences in Northern Ireland.

Membership reflects a wide range of interests in Drainage. The Council is made up of 10 District Councillors, a Drainage Specialist, representatives from Conservation, Fisheries, Agriculture, Industry, Tourism and DOE Planning Service and the Chief Executive of the Rivers Agency. Members are appointed for a 4-year term and appointments are made in accordance with the principles of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

2 How important is drainage and flood defence to Northern Ireland?

To understand the role of the Drainage Council it is important to recognise the importance of drainage in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland has an extensive network of rivers and loughs, rainfall is relatively high and soils are prone to waterlogging. These factors mean that effective river management and flood defences are vital for the prosperity of Northern Ireland.

The Rivers Agency, which is an Executive Agency of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, is the body with responsibility for drainage and flood defence in Northern Ireland.

The type of works which the Agency may carry out includes:-

- Building and maintaining flood walls and banks to protect urban centres from flooding from rivers or the sea.
- Installing and repairing underground culverts.
- Improvements to increase the capacity of watercourses to deal with increased run-off from new industrial or housing development.

- Maintenance of rural watercourses to provide adequate outlet for land drainage.
- Routine clearing operations to remove obstructions to flow.
- Responding to watercourse related flooding incidents.
- Maintenance of the levels of Lough Erne and Lough Neagh within statutory limits.

That programme is guided by decisions of the Independent Drainage Council for Northern Ireland.

3 What is the role of the Drainage Council?

(a) Designation of Watercourses

It is the Council's responsibility to decide which watercourses and sea defences should be maintained by the Rivers Agency at public expense. The Council "designates" such watercourses and sea defences. Over 6,800 kms of watercourses and 26 kms of sea defences have been designated since the Council was established in 1947.

In deciding to designate a watercourse the Council must be satisfied that any drainage works needed are outside the capability of landowners and that works at public expense on the watercourse would provide value for money.

The Council may also decide to de-designate a watercourse or sea defence if circumstances change and its maintenance at public expense is no longer justified.

(b) Consideration of Drainage Schemes

The Council meets around 3 times each year.

It may examine and comment on:-

- (i) Rivers Agency's plans for drainage and flood defence schemes;
- (ii) reports on the likely impact of proposed works on the natural or built environment;
- (iii) details of any emergency works carried out;
- (iv) the Agency's annual watercourse maintenance programme;
- (v) any drainage proposals affecting roads, bridges or culverts – in effect any drainage issue likely to have an impact on the public.