

MINUTES OF 150th MEETING OF THE DRAINAGE COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND HELD AT 10.30am ON THURSDAY, 17 JUNE 2010 AT THE MILLBROOK LODGE HOTEL, BALLYNAHINCH

Present:

Mr G Crawford (Chairman)
Alderman H Nicholl
Alderman R Beggs
Councillor A Graham
Councillor A Rainey
Councillor G McHugh
Councillor J McBriar
Councillor S Clarke
Councillor W King
Mr J Clarke
Mr R Cummings
Mr T Clarke
Mr T Hinds
Ms R Dobbin

In Attendance:

Mr J Glass (Secretary)
Mr D Nixon
Mr P Aldridge
Mr P Mehaffey
Ms D Tinsley

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the 150th meeting of the Drainage Council.

The Chairman went on to extend welcome to Ms Dorothy Tinsley, who was attending to assist with administration.

The Chairman then invited the Secretary to offer any apologies that had been received.

2. APOLOGIES

The Secretary advised that apologies had been received from Councillor Oliver Hughes, Councillor Michael Gillespie, and Dr Harold Johnston.

3. MINUTES OF 149th MEETING

The Chairman asked if members agreed that the minutes of the last meeting were an accurate record.

On the proposal of Alderman Beggs, seconded by Councillor King, the minutes were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman asked Councillor Allan and Mr Hinds if they had received a copy of Mr Mehaffey's flooding report presentation from the 149th meeting. Both members confirmed that they had, and were content. Action Point on page 8 of the previous minutes refers.

The Chairman confirmed that he had issued a letter on behalf of the Drainage Council to Minister Michelle Gildernew MP MLA stating the Council's support for the strategic outline case for additional funding prepared by Rivers Agency. He advised that a copy of the letter was included in the business book under correspondence. Action point on page 11 refers.

The Chairman then asked The Secretary to confirm that letters had been issued to Ms Delores Kelly MLA and Mr Samuel Lawson regarding the decision of the Council not to designate the watercourse affecting Annaghanon Road in Waringstown. The Secretary advised the Council that copies of the letters issued on this matter were included in the business book under correspondence. Action Point on page 11 of previous minutes refers.

Referring to Mr Mehaffey's flooding presentation from the previous meeting, Councillor McHugh enquired about possible steps that could be taken to reduce the risk of flooding in County Fermanagh in the future. Councillor McHugh explained that following the high profile coverage of the flooding in November 2009 expectations were high amongst the local population that works would be undertaken, possibly including works to Ballyshannon Power Station. Mr Mehaffey advised Councillor McHugh that an extensive report into the flooding in County Fermanagh, including possible measures to reduce the risk of future flooding, was in the process of being finalised by the Flooding Taskforce. Mr Mehaffey offered to forward a copy of the report to Councillor McHugh when it became available. Councillor McHugh accepted Mr Mehaffey's offer.

The Chairman stated that the problems in County Fermanagh that led to the flooding of November 2009 could not be attributed to the Ballyshannon Power Station. Mr Mehaffey agreed with The Chairman, and went on to explain that the natural restrictions on the volume of water that could be carried by the channels in the Lough Erne system was the key problem that led to the flooding. Mr Mehaffey added that the current controls in place on the Lough Erne system reflected this.

Mr T Clarke provided an update for the Council on the issue of Drainage Infrastructure Charging (DIC). He explained that DOE Planning Service were considering DIC as part of Planning Land Reform and thus far had received general support for the idea of charging. Mr T Clarke advised the Council that Planning Service had concluded that DIC was an issue affecting several areas of government and as such had prepared a submission paper for the Executive through their Minister suggesting that the Executive should take the lead on the issue of DIC.

Councillor McHugh agreed that DIC was a worthwhile initiative. He stated that, not only was it important that developers should contribute towards the costs of providing infrastructure for development, but that such contributions would encourage developers to give careful consideration towards the location of development sites as areas at risk of flooding would incur greater expense.

The Chairman thanked members for their contributions, and then invited Mr Aldridge to address the Council.

ACTION – Mr Mehaffey to issue a copy of the Fermanagh Flooding Taskforce Report to Councillor McHugh when available

5. UPDATE ON MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME

Mr Aldridge presented the details of the Major Works Programme being undertaken by the Rivers Agency. Using a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation to assist, he indicated the geographical location and details of completed, current and proposed works and schemes. Mr Aldridge also included photographs and other diagrams for illustration where appropriate.

5.1 Culvert Renovation Works currently under construction

Belfast – Mount Vernon Stream;
Belfast – Rochester Avenue Stream.

Mr Aldridge provided a short summary of each of the works listed, including the reasons for the works, outline of the works with photographs and maps for illustration, and the costs and benefits.

5.2 Culvert Renovation Works currently proposed

Banbridge – Brookfield Stream;
Antrim – Steeple Burn, Holm Factory Drain, and Springfarm;
Keady – St Patrick’s Street.

Again Mr Aldridge provided a short summary of the works listed detailing the reasons for the works, an outline of the detailed works involved, and the costs and benefits.

Mr Aldridge then concluded this section by providing the Council with an overall tabular summary of the culvert renovation works being undertaken by the Rivers Agency.

5.3 Schemes Undergoing Feasibility Study

Annesborough;
Belfast – Lucerne Parade;
Belfast – Finaghy, Ashton Park;
Beragh – Cloughfin River;
Banbridge – Showground Stream;
Dromara – Lagan;
Drumaness;
Glengormley – Collinward Stream;
Kilkeel – Cranfield, Whitewater;
Laurelvale – Laurelvale Stream;
Maghera Co. Down;
Magheralin – Ballymacaine Stream;
Mallusk – Blackwater/Ballymartin;
Markethill – Bryandrum Stream;
Newtownabbey – Collinbridge;
Portadown – Blackerburn;

Rostrevor;
Sixmilewater River;
Whiteabbey – Threemile Water, and Greenisland Stream.

5.4 Feasibility Studies recently completed

Ahoghill – Village Stream;
Annaclone – Cappagh Mill Burn;
Belfast – East Belfast Drainage Study;
Ballinderry – Brackagh Burn & Ballinderry Millrace;
Ballygawley – Ballygawley Flood Alleviation Scheme including St Ciaran’s School;
Coalisland – Coalisland Millrace;
Doagh – Doagh River;
Lurgan – Halfpenny River & Tirsogue Drain;
Parkgate – Fourmile Burn;
Paint Condition Survey at the Cutts and Portna Sluice Gates;
Whiteabbey – Concrete Row.

5.5 Schemes Recently Completed

None to report.

5.6 Schemes Currently Undergoing Construction

Carrickfergus – Sullatober Water Phase 1.

5.7 Proposed Schemes (To commence in 2010/2011 financial year)

Belfast – Loop River Phase 1, Knock and Connswater Rivers, Loop River Phase 2;
Coleraine – Lodge Burn;
Painting of gates at the Cutts and Portna Sluices.

5.8 Schemes Currently Undergoing Design

Belfast – Loop River Phase 2
Carrickfergus – Sullatober Water Phase II;
Limavady – River Roe;
Magherafelt - North West Drainage;
Omagh – Hunter Crescent, Johnston Stream II.

The Chairman thanked Mr Aldridge for his presentation, and invited comments and queries from the members.

Alderman Beggs began by enquiring about the proposed works in East Belfast on the Connswater Community Group Greenway Project. He asked if Mr Aldridge could advise the Council of any progress regarding securing the necessary finances to proceed with the project.

Mr Aldridge assured the Council that the Rivers Agency was doing everything possible to secure the funding for this project. He further advised that some funding was available for works in this area that had already been included in the Agency’s existing programme of works, and that these

would proceed as planned. Mr Aldridge stressed that the Agency continued to press the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) for the release of the required funds, and that a good deal of lobbying by various parties on behalf of the Agency was ongoing. Mr Aldridge stated that the Agency was hopeful of a positive result.

Mr J Clarke advised the Council that the funding relating to the Connswater Community Greenway Project was included in a Strategic Outline Case submitted to DFP, which would be addressed later in the meeting. The Chairman acknowledged this.

Councillor S Clarke then enquired about the flooding damage at Moyola and asked if any consideration had been given to flood alleviation works at Moyola. Mr Mehaffey advised that Rivers Agency had investigated and had concluded that the flooding at Moyola had been a result of bank failure. He informed the Council that the bank that had failed had been repaired and further maintenance works had been carried out on this section of watercourse. Councillor S Clarke asked if Mr Mehaffey was confident that the bank would stand up to further high levels of the river. Mr Mehaffey answered that this really couldn't be predicted with any level of certainty, but that he was content that the Agency had done everything possible to minimise the risk of future flooding.

Councillor King welcomed the news of works being carried out on the Lodge Burn in Coleraine and went on to ask if Waterways Ireland were involved in the proposed works to paint the sluice gates at Portna and the Cutts. Mr Mehaffey clarified that Waterways Ireland were responsible for Lough Neagh water recreation and navigation whilst the Agency had responsibility for the maintenance of the water levels on the Lough and the Lower Bann within set minimum and maximum levels. Mr Mehaffey went on to explain that the Agency used the sluice gates to maintain the levels as effectively as possible depending on weather conditions.

Councillor King enquired about the cost of carrying out the maintenance works on the sluice gates. Mr Aldridge advised Councillor King that the proposed works on the sluice gates was included on the main agenda for today's meeting, and would therefore be considered in more detail then. He did however assure Councillor King that the proposed works were cost effective.

Councillor Rainey asked Mr Aldridge if the Rivers Agency prioritised flood alleviation works. Mr Aldridge explained that the Agency had a works prioritisation process to determine the order in which flood alleviation works were undertaken. He detailed a number of factors that were taken into consideration as part of this process and highlighted that one of the key factors was ensuring that works were undertaken at a suitable time to ensure the best value for money possible.

Councillor Rainey then enquired about possible works at Ballygawley. Mr Aldridge explained that the Agency had a number of flood alleviation schemes ongoing with capital funding allocated. He went on to detail that the current financial climate meant that works that had not commenced could not be guaranteed to receive the funding required. Mr Aldridge advised Councillor Rainey that works at Ballygawley were programmed to start in the 2011/2012 financial year but could not be confirmed to go ahead until the necessary funding was in place.

Mr J Clarke added that the current situation meant that the future funding available to the Rivers Agency was unknown, and that as a result only those contracts that were already commenced could be guaranteed to continue until such time as the financial situation was clarified by the Executive.

Councillor McHugh voiced his support for the works at Ballygawley and stated his belief that a number of projects were being carried out in and around Belfast. He called for more projects to be undertaken in the west of the province and more emphasis placed on an equal spread of schemes across the country. Councillor McHugh also asked if the Drainage Council would have an input into how Rivers Agency prioritises works.

Mr Aldridge assured Councillor McHugh that, as a key stakeholder of Rivers Agency, the views of the Drainage Council would be sought and taken into consideration when prioritising works. Mr Aldridge also assured the Council that Rivers Agency carried out works in reaction to flooding events and risk of future flooding, he stressed that no emphasis was placed either the east or the west of the country. Mr Aldridge stated that over the last few years a number of schemes had been completed in the west of the country where necessary in reaction to increased risk of flooding.

Councillor Beggs asked if a list of schemes completed over the last 10 years could be provided to the Council. Mr Aldridge confirmed that he would provide such a list.

Mr Hinds commented on communication and the benefits that could be derived from early and comprehensive communication with the public. He asked if the Rivers Agency had a communication strategy in place.

Mr J Clarke stated that Rivers Agency acknowledged communications as an area that needed to be strengthened. He accepted that there was a requirement to engage positively with the media and get information about flooding and the positive works of the Agency to the public in a more structured and efficient way. Mr J Clarke confirmed that the Rivers Agency had commissioned an independent communications strategy and were now working to implement the recommendations and be more proactive in this area.

Alderman Nicholl asked about the impact on the Agency of the winding up of the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committees. Mr J Clarke agreed that the Agency had enjoyed the benefits of the group and the provision of forums for interested parties to discuss the management of the water levels on Lough Neagh in an organised way. He stressed that the Agency supported the Committees and would be disappointed if they were indeed wound up.

Mr Mehaffey concurred with Mr J Clarke and repeated that the Agency would be hugely disappointed to see the Committees wound up.

Alderman Nicholl agreed with the sentiments being expressed and added that a number of District Councils were also disappointed to hear of the possible winding up of the Committees. Mr Mehaffey added that the Committees also offered the Rivers Agency a good opportunity to inform interested parties about water level management issues as and when needed.

Alderman Nicholl asked if the Drainage Council could write to express its disappointment at the possible winding up of the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committees, and to show support for the Committees. Mr Mehaffey confirmed that a letter would be drafted on behalf of the Drainage Council.

Mr Hinds asked if the Drainage Council could also be under threat in the current financial climate. Mr J Clarke assured the Council that given its advisory and audit role and the fact that it

is constituted by the Drainage (NI) Order 1973 it would not be under threat of being wound up at this time.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions before inviting Mr Mehaffey to address the Council.

ACTION – Mr Aldridge to provide a list of the Capital works undertaken by Rivers Agency from 2000 – 2010 to members.

ACTION – Letter in support of the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committees to be drafted by secretariat.

6. FLOODING REPORT

Mr Mehaffey presented the flooding report to the Council. He explained to the Council that in the intervening period from the previous meeting there had been one flooding event. This significant event had occurred on 30/31 March 2010, affecting mainly the north coast and east of the country. Mr Mehaffey detailed that the flooding that had occurred had mostly resulted from surface water run-off and some overtopping of watercourses. He stated that 54.2 mm of rainfall was recorded over the twenty four hour period at Helens Bay.

Mr Mehaffey advised the Council that during 30 to 31 March 196 emergency calls to report flooding had been received by Rivers Agency, with 332 calls received by the Flooding Incident Line reporting flooding from different sources. He added that the River Agency had responded to 154 flooding incidents. Mr Mehaffey was able to report that from those incidents 1 commercial property, 6 domestic properties, and 8 private garages experienced flooding. During those incidents Rivers Agency deployed 156 members of staff and placed 4000 sandbags to protect threatened properties.

Mr Mehaffey went on to describe some of the incidents attended by Rivers Agency staff. He explained that a factory had been flooded at Glenford Way in Newtownards due to blocked road gullies, that 6 domestic properties had been affected at Carnasure Terrace in Comber as a result of an undesignated watercourse becoming blocked under the road, and that sandbags had been deployed to protect properties at risk in Hillsborough, Saintfield, and Laurelvale.

The Chairman thanked Mr Mehaffey for his presentation of the flooding report and complimented the Rivers Agency on their performance. He then asked if members had any questions or comments.

Councillor McBriar referred to the flooding incidents at Comber and Newtownards and stated his belief that it would be beneficial if Drainage Council members could be advised of flooding events as they happen. Mr J Clarke stated his understanding that in the modern era demand was much higher for information as and when incidents were happening. Mr J Clarke acknowledged this demand and advised the Council that Rivers Agency was attempting to address this as soon as possible.

Mr Mehaffey added that to supply live updates on flooding would be extremely difficult, but that Rivers Agency produced a flooding report in the immediate aftermath of events which could be supplied to Drainage Council members. The Chairman agreed that this would be more practical

and suggested that it would be a good idea to circulate the report electronically if possible. Mr Mehaffey advised the Council that he would investigate this possibility and report back at the next meeting. Alderman Beggs added his belief that it would also be beneficial for the 26 District Councils to be supplied with flooding reports.

Councillor McHugh asked if the Rivers Agency was aware of the problem of flytipping into watercourses, and suggested that good fencing along watercourses could help alleviate the problem. Mr Mehaffey referred back to the provision of reports to the District Councils and confirmed that he would include this in his report for the next meeting. Mr Mehaffey then responded to Councillor McHugh's query and confirmed that the Agency was aware of the ongoing problem of flytipping into watercourses. He stressed that the Agency did everything possible to educate the public on the increased flood risk caused by dumping materials into watercourses.

Councillor Graham stated the importance of elected members of the Drainage Council being able to contact Rivers Agency rapidly to pass on information regarding flood risks. He added that it was important for one agency to take responsibility and deal with flooding events as the public did not like the impression of "passing the buck". Mr Mehaffey agreed with Councillor Graham but stated that the difficulty arose in cases where responsibility for dealing with a flooding problem was unclear. Mr Mehaffey assured the Council that the Rivers Agency did everything possible to ensure that the best responder would be in place to deal with flooding issues.

Mr T Clarke asked if it would be possible for the Rivers Agency to post the flooding reports on their website. Mr J Clarke answered that this may be possible and would also be included as a consideration for Mr Mehaffey's report for the next meeting. Mr J Clarke recognised the impression of the public that at a strategic level the presence of an overview on flood response across government was lacking. He advised the Council that this was being considered and the Council would be updated as soon as possible. Mr J Clarke referred back to Mr T Clarke's question and answered that the Agency was improving its communications and would consider publishing flooding reports on its website, however he also stated that he was wary of raising public expectations too much.

Alderman Beggs voiced his support for educating the public on the dangers of flytipping into watercourses and stressed the need to take firm action against those who dump material in this way.

Following confirmation that members had no further questions or comments, The Chairman thanked Mr Mehaffey for his presentation and directed members to the designation of watercourse and scheme recommended for acceptance section of the business book, pages 14 to 18. The Chairman then invited Mr Aldridge to address the Council.

ACTION – Mr Mehaffey to provide a report to the Council on the possibility of providing flooding reports to Drainage Council members and District Councils

7. DESIGNATION OF WATERCOURSE AND SCHEME RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

Highfield Road/Moneymore Road Drainage Scheme, Magherafelt.

Mr Aldridge gave a background report explaining that this proposal was being made to allow the Rivers Agency to carry out a scheme required to alleviate the risk of flooding to a number of properties in the vicinity of the Highfield Road and Moneymore Road in Magherafelt. Mr Aldridge added that the costs of the scheme would be in the order of £500,000 and that based on calculations the benefits of the scheme were estimated to be £6.4M.

On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Graham, the Council determined that the aforementioned sections of watercourse should be designated, and the proposed scheme should be accepted.

The Chairman thanked Mr Aldridge for his presentation and then referred members to the scheme recommended for acceptance on pages 19 to 22 of their business books, and invited Mr Aldridge to again address members.

8. SCHEME RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

Sluice Gate structures at Portna and the Cutts, River Bann. Painting and Access Improvement Scheme.

Mr Aldridge detailed the proposed scheme for the Council, explaining that the scheme involved painting of and improvements made to the sluice gate structures on the River Bann at Portna, Kilrea and the Cutts, Coleraine. Mr Aldridge advised the Council that the scheme would improve the overall lifespan of the structures paint protection by 15 to 17 years and would enable Rivers Agency staff to more safely enter and egress from the structures, thereby reducing the risk of potential personal injuries.

On the proposal of Alderman Beggs, seconded by Councillor King, the Council agreed to the proposed scheme.

Councillor McHugh voiced his support for the scheme and asked if it was standard practice for infrastructure to be maintained in this way. He also asked if a comparison had been done with roads that are left and replaced when required. Mr Aldridge stressed the value in the Rivers Agency carrying out this scheme as soon as possible to avoid significant costs later. He explained that those costs would be much greater than the scheme put forward at this meeting.

Councillor Graham asked if the Agency had left the structures too long and could have carried out ongoing maintenance to avoid a £1M scheme. Mr Aldridge explained that the bulk of the cost of the scheme was for the considerable amount of work and expertise required to remove the sluice gate structures from the river. He stated that the costs of the actual painting and maintenance works amounted to a small proportion of the overall costs.

Councillor Rainey agreed with Mr Aldridge that it was a major job being undertaken, with much more involved than simply applying a coat of paint.

The Chairman thanked members for their input and then drew their attention to the works recommended for acceptance section of the business book, pages 23 to 30. The Chairman asked Mr Mehaffey to address the Council.

9. WORKS RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

MW2520 Mill Burn Bridge, Randalstown refurbishment works

Mr Mehaffey advised the Council that works were proposed on an old railway bridge at the location of the Drumsough Road, Randalstown. He explained that these works were necessary to reduce the risk of blockage and subsequent flooding at the bridge and would involve the removal of twin pipes to be replaced by a new bridge structure, along with lowering the depth of the river bed.

On the proposal of Alderman Nicholl, seconded by Mr Hinds, the Council determined that the proposed works should be approved.

U3919 Halfpenny River, Lurgan bridge refurbishment works

Mr Mehaffey detailed for the Council works proposed to alleviate an ongoing flooding problem at the location of Silverwood Lane in Lurgan. He described the works for the Council, explaining that they would involve the replacement of the existing bridge with a box culvert and associated bank protection works.

On the proposal of Councillor McBriar, seconded by Councillor Rainey, the Council determined that the works should be accepted.

The Chairman thanked Mr Mehaffey for his presentations to the Council and referred members to the watercourse which the Department is not prepared to recommend for designation section of the business books, pages 31 to 32, before asking Mr Mehaffey to again address the Council

10. WATERCOURSE WHICH THE DEPARTMENT IS NOT PREPARED TO RECOMMEND FOR DESIGNATION

Mr Mehaffey advised the Council that representations had been received for the designation of the Doagh River at Doagh and Burnside to allow flood alleviation works to be undertaken to alleviate a flooding problem at these locations.

Mr Mehaffey explained that investigations had identified the source of the problems at two road bridges at Burn Road and Ballymena Road. He advised that responsibility for these bridges would lie with the Roads Service of the Department of Regional Development (DRD). As a result Mr Mehaffey stated that the Agency could not designate the watercourse and carry out works at these bridges, however he did assure the Council that he would pursue the matter with DRD Roads Service.

Alderman Nicholl expressed his concern with the lack of apparent progress at this location. He explained that he had met with the local residents and had been advised that the flooding being experienced had been ongoing for a period of more than two years with no visible improvement. Alderman Nicholl stated that he felt it was difficult for the residents to accept that the Doagh River could not be designated when a smaller river in the area, the Fourmile Burn, was designated and maintained by Rivers Agency.

Mr Mehaffey assured the Council that the Rivers Agency was doing everything possible to ensure that works to alleviate the flooding problem were undertaken. He confirmed that Rivers Agency officials were liaising with their colleagues in DRD Roads Service on possible solutions to the problem and working to progress works as soon as possible. Alderman Beggs called on the Rivers Agency to keep the pressure on and ensure that works necessary to alleviate the risk of flooding were completed.

On the proposal of Alderman Beggs, seconded by Alderman Nicholl, the Council agreed that the Doagh River should not be designated.

The Chairman then asked members to turn to the correspondence section of the business books, pages 33 to 36, and asked the Secretary to address the Council

ACTION – Mr Mehaffey to pursue necessary works to reduce the risk of flooding in the vicinity of the Doagh River with DRD Roads Service.

11. CORRESPONDENCE ISSUED SINCE LAST MEETING

The Secretary drew members' attention to pages 33 to 36 of the business book. He advised the Council that correspondence had been sent to Minister Michelle Gildernew MP MLA to show the support of the Council for the call for additional funding to allow Rivers Agency to proceed with their works alongside the Connswater Community Greenway Project in East Belfast. The Secretary also advised the Council that a response had been received from the Minister and was also included in the business book.

Councillor McHugh asked if the funding required for the Greenway project would cause a constraint in other capital budgets. Mr J Clarke assured the Council that the bid was for additional funding above and beyond the current budget and that all works already programmed would proceed as planned. He explained that no funding would be diverted from other projects.

The Secretary moved on to draw members' attention to the letter issued by him as Secretary to the Council advising Ms Delores Kelly MLA that her request for the watercourse affecting Annaghanoon Road in Craigavon to be designated had been unsuccessful. Finally, The Secretary also drew members' attention to the letter sent to Mr Samuel Dawson on the same subject.

The Chairman thanked The Secretary for presenting the correspondence, and asked if members had any other questions that they wished to raise. The Chairman confirmed that no further queries were to be raised.

12. RIVERS AGENCY BUSINESS PLAN 2010/2011

Before proceeding with item 12 The Chairman asked members if they would agree to defer item number 13 until the next meeting. The Council agreed to this request. The Chairman then invited The Secretary to address the Council.

The Secretary presented to the Council the business plan for the Rivers Agency for the 2010/2011 financial year. He provided a brief overview of the business plan and highlighted the

key objectives of the Agency for the 2010/2011 year. The Secretary advised members that full copies of the business plan were available and then asked for any comments or questions.

Mr Hinds asked if risk management was included in the business plan. The Secretary explained that the Agency prepared a separate risk register that was monitored and updated on a regular basis. Mr J Clarke added that the Agency also had a stewardship statement and other internal control mechanisms included in the Annual Report and Accounts to cover risk management.

The Chairman thanked members for their input and thanked The Secretary for his presentation. The Chairman proceeded to ask members if there was any other business to be brought before the Council at this meeting.

13. AOB

13.1 Fermanagh flooding

Councillor McHugh expressed concerns held by members of the Fermanagh District Council that the report into the flooding in Fermanagh would make little difference on the ground. He stated that the local residents felt there was work that could be done, and were troubled by an apparent lack of progress.

Mr Mehaffey advised Councillor McHugh that the Flooding Taskforce had recently met and were working towards a published report before the end of summer 2010. He assured Councillor McHugh that the findings and recommendations within the report could be discussed in more detail at the next meeting of the Council. Mr Mehaffey also stated that the cooperation of the Lough Erne Committees would be essential to progressing any findings or recommendations.

Councillor Rainey voiced his support for Councillor McHugh's position and went on to enquire about possible maintenance works on the watercourse affecting Beragh. He stated that local residents were worried about potential flooding and wanted to see works being undertaken.

Mr Mehaffey advised Councillor Rainey that the Cloghfin River that affects Beragh is designated for maintenance by Rivers Agency, and is included on the maintenance schedule for inspection and works as required to ensure the free flow. He assured Councillor Rainey that, following the extreme flooding of August 2008, everything possible to reduce flooding risk through extensive maintenance of the water course had been done. Mr Mehaffey added that further works on the Cloghfin River were being considered, but would be subject to ongoing financial pressures.

Councillor Rainey accepted this but stated that the local residents wanted more substantial works. Mr J Clarke acknowledged that Rivers Agency were not undertaking as much capital works as they would like, but stated that in the current financial situation the Agency had to balance need with available budgets to carry out works in the best way possible.

Councillor McHugh enquired about the use of private contractors for drainage maintenance works and asked if this was a very efficient way of carrying out works. Councillor McHugh asked if checks were in place to ensure works were carried out to an acceptable standard. Mr Hinds asked if the Agency considered ways to reduce costs and improve efficiencies in this area.

Mr Mehaffey answered that the Agency carried out as much works as possible using in house staff and was very aware of budgetary constraints and the need to ensure efficiency. He assured the Council that the Agency ensured all works were completed to an acceptable standard.

Mr J Clarke reinforced Mr Mehaffeys point about the efficiency of the Rivers Agency in carrying out works and making the best possible use of available funds. He stated that the Agency was as efficient as possible. Mr J Clarke thanked the Council for their interest in the work of the Agency and promised to keep members up to date.

11.2 Members Folders

The Secretary drew members' attention to the travel expenses claim form and enquiry form provided.

11.3 Date & general location for next meeting

The Secretary proposed a number of dates around late October or early November 2010 for the next meeting. After some deliberation it was agreed that the Secretariat would make arrangements for 21 October 2010 and notify members of the arrangements in due course.

The Chairman then thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed.

Meeting Closed

