

LOUGH CARRA CATCHMENT ASSOCIATION  
18 FEBRUARY 2020 - MEETING MINUTES  
CARNACON COMMUNITY CENTRE 8-9.30PM

Chairperson	Tom Byrne	
Vice-Chairperson	Peter Byrne	
Secretary	Lynda Huxley	
Treasurers	Joe Flannelly and Pat Gibbons	
Technical Advisors	Chris Huxley and Cilian Roden	
Tony Baynes	David Duffy	Al McDonnell
Verena Berard	Padraig Farrell	Paddy McGing
Peter Bowyer	Eugene Finnerty	Gerry McHale
Peter Byrne	Joe Flannelly	Pat McHale
Tom Byrne	Pat Gibbons	Peter Mitchell
John Campbell	Ger Heverin	Susan Pryce
Peter Comer	Teresa Horan	Kevin Sheridan
Paul Connolly	Walter Hughes	Pat Stanton
Séan Coyne	Chris Huxley	Alan Stephens
Ronan Cusack	Lynda Huxley	Kelly Trunnel
Philip Doddy	Michael Kingdon	
<b>APOLOGIES :</b> Ray Broughton Deborah Broughton	William Cormacan Michael Hegarty Bryan Kennedy	Cilian Roden Deirdre Walsh Will Woodrow

## AGENDA ITEMS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. A particular welcome was given to Dr Peter Bowyer.

### **Minutes of the last meeting**

The Chair read out the minutes of the January 2020 meeting.

**Proposed : Tony Baynes**  
**Seconded : Peter Mitchell**

### **Report on Technical Working Group meeting by Chris Huxley**

The Technical Working Group met on 5 February 2020 in the NPWS offices in Castlebar. Present at the meeting were : Verena Berard, William Cormacan, Philip Doddy, Ailbhe Douglas, Chris Huxley, Martin Keating, Peter Mitchell, Cilian Roden.

The following items were discussed/presented at the meeting :

**Progress Report from Woodrow Sustainable Solutions (WSS) on the Feasibility Study**

**Coillte** : Jackie Hunt's report on management of their four areas of forestry has been submitted and Coillte seem positive about participation in a LIFE project – as a partner.

**EPA** : there is a need for water quality monitoring effort to be increased. The EPA should be an associated beneficiary.

**Teagasc** : there is a need to harmonise the advice farmers get from Teagasc with what they would get from a LIFE project. It would be good to use the BRIDE project and other, similar projects to provide best practice guidelines. Teagasc need to be persuaded that catchments require different approaches and a LIFE project would need to find a way of addressing the ambivalent approach of Teagasc (productivity vs environment).

**Group Water Schemes** : happy to co-operate.

**OPW** : have expressed an interest in the idea of constructed wetlands – this will need to be explored. The LAWPRO/OPW link needs to be strengthened.

**Vincent Wildlife Trust** : positive about participation.

**Department of Agriculture** : needs to be included and would probably be able to contribute cash.

Overall, there is a need for WSS to ensure that partner/beneficiary status is decided to best advantage. This might need further discussion at a future meeting.

### **Plan for 2020**

Funding for preparation and submission of Concept Note : WSS have indicated that they would need around €9,000 to complete this exercise. NPWS and Mayo Co Co will investigate the possibility of contributing and report back soon. Leader have confirmed that they cannot help. LCCA Secretary will submit an application to the Community Water Development Fund.

WSS expect to finalise their work on the Feasibility Study by the end of February. This will be a document of about 100 pages with lots of technical material.

As the Co-ordinating Beneficiary, Mayo Co Co will need to have detailed consultations during the preparation of the Concept Note. Their full commitment in that role was confirmed by Martin Keating.

Once LCCA gains charitable status, many further funding sources will open up. A priority for 2020 will then be the establishment of a physical presence i.e. manned office.

### **Farmer Survey**

WSS designed a questionnaire to survey farmer attitudes after the EC comment that this was lacking in the first Concept Note. The LCCA Farmer Liaison Group are conducting the survey and hope to meet around 100 farmers (i.e. 20%). Although it is desirable to cover a representative sample, it is not known what a representative sample is. It is hoped that the act of conducting the survey and reporting the results will be sufficient to satisfy the EC.

The link with farmers should also include a visit (for farmers in the catchment) to something like the EIP BRIDE (Biodiversity Regeneration in a Dairying Environment) project in Cork. NPWS would provide the bus for up to 40 for such a visit.

### **Additional Actions**

**Biochar** : the LCCA Farmer Liaison Group is pursuing the possibility of an experiment to trial the effectiveness of biochar for intercepting nutrients.

**Removal of Vegetation** : The removal of vegetation in order to remove nutrients should be investigated, with the possibility of OPW involvement. This is a technique used in other parts of the world. However, there are serious concerns about this approach since the reedbed and bulrush stands

are important elements of the ecosystem and disturbance of the lakebed might be problematic. It could be included as an experimental action, but constructed wetlands are more likely to be of benefit.

Paul Connolly of the National Federation of Group Water Schemes mentioned that care should be taken with such a project to ensure it would not affect the 1,000 households that get drinking water from the lake.

Verena Berard mentioned that GMIT (Galway Mayo Institute of Technology) Science Department in Galway have been doing water quality sampling and they may be able to assist in this area.

### **AOB**

The LCCA has been invited to present a paper on Lough Carra at the April Conference of the International Association of Hydrogeologists on the topic of Characterisation and Management of Groundwater in Limestones.

The Technical Committee discussed how little is known about how the water moves around the lake or how fast. Dr Peter Bowyer who is a physical oceanographer attended the launch of the Lough Carra Booklet and Qualities of Water exhibition. Dr Bowyer, present at this meeting, has expressed interest in assisting the LCCA with investigating the movement of water in the lake. He has carried out similar work on Lough Mask.

## **Report - Farmer Liaison Committee by Joe Flannelly**

- The Farmer Liaison Committee (FLC) has submitted a grant application to the Communities Water Fund 2020 for 3 nose pumps and 2 solar pumps. Approval for the siting of these pumps should the grant application be successful was obtained from William Cormacan, NPWS.
- The FLC consider the Survey of farmer attitudes, compiled by Philip Doddy, to be a very important document and have agreed to circulate the survey to farmers in the catchment. In addition to answering specific questions, there is a section where farmers' can give their own thoughts. This is an anonymous survey with no details of the farmer being recorded although there is the opportunity for the farmer to include his herd number if he wishes, but this is not an obligation. The FLC consider this a fantastic way of raising awareness. Each farmer will receive a copy of the Lough Carra booklet along with the survey forms. Pat Gibbons is leading this project and has so far received 70 completed survey form and will try to get at least 100 completed. The responses from farmers so far have been favourable and some have offered to help with the Biochar project.

The Chair thanked the FLC members for leading the survey project and helping raise awareness. The Chair also thanked Philip Doddy of Woodrow SS for his work in producing such a comprehensive survey form.

## **Matters Arising**

- **Charitable Status**

Chris Huxley reported that he has had some assistance from Gary Smyth and is making progress completing all the necessary paper work.

- **Reedbed Survey**

Chris Huxley reported that he did not submit a grant application to the Communities Water Fund to carry out a Reedbed Survey as was proposed at the last meeting. However, he has spoken to Aine O'Connor in NPWS. It has been suggested that should the LCCA be successful with the LIFE bid then this survey could be incorporated as part of the LIFE project. If this is not possible she is keen to ensure that a survey is carried out in the next year or two.

- **Finance**

**Credit Union Account :**

Main account : €6,038.74

Flexi account : €1,253.779

**Balance €7,292.53**

**Bank of Ireland Account :**

**Balance €2,994.00**

**Combined Total = €10,286.53**

- **Winter Water Levels**

Al McDonnell informed the meeting that he has been monitoring winter water levels for many years. When there are high water levels in winter the water quality in the summer appears to be bad. The water levels today are almost at the record levels of 2016 and more rain is forecast. He added that he feels that there should be specialist monitoring of the low-lying area around the lake feeder streams because when the floods recede nutrients from those areas go to the lake. Thus it is important to identify low lying areas that are currently flooded and because the water levels are at a record high, this is the right time to do this.

Peter Mitchell of LawPro said that their work is focussed on Priority Areas for Action and this would be a one-off exercise. He will bring Al's observations to the Catchment Manager, Bernie White.

Padraig Farrell said that he would approach a contact in Newport who may be able to use his drone to take aerial images of areas identified by Al.

The Chair summarised that 1) Peter Mitchell will inform Bernie White to see if LawPro can do anything 2) Padraig Farrell will find out the cost of using drone for aerial images and report back to the Technical Committee.

Chris Huxley suggested that this information might be significant to the LIFE application. Philip Doddy agreed that since OPW is one of the partners then such information would be useful in terms of OPW's management of water levels.

The Chair asked for blanket approval for all decisions and discussions from the meeting.  
There was full approval from the floor.

## **NEXT MEETING**

**The meeting was scheduled for 24 March but because of Covid-19 there will be no meetings until further notice.**