



LOUGH CARRA CATCHMENT ASSOCIATION (LCCA)

Reg. Charity No. 20206138

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday 13 September 2022

8.00 To 9.30 pm Partry Community Centre

	Directors
Chairperson	Tom Byrne
Vice-Chairperson	Peter Byrne
Secretary	Lynda Huxley
Treasurers	Joe Flannelly and Pat Gibbons
Technical Advisors	Chris Huxley, Cilian Roden, Philip Doddy
	Sean Coyne

Antony Baynes	Teresa Horan	Lucy Roberts
Tom Byrne	Chris Huxley	Sean Roberts
John Campbell - IFI	Lynda Huxley	Barry Rourke
Norita Clesham	Padraig Kelly	Pat Stanton
James Conran - NPWS	Al McDonnell - Cllr	Michael Sweeney
Ronan Cusack - IFI	Pat McHale	
Kieran Flynn - LIFE	Emer Morrin	
Pat Gibbons	Catherine O'Reilly	
APOLOGIES : Phil Brookes Deborah Broughton Ray Broughton Peter Byrne	Sean Coyne Philip Doddy Olivia Feeny Mary Roache Cilian Roden	John Thornton

AGENDA ITEMS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting in particular the new NPWS ranger James Conran.

Minutes of the last meeting

The secretary read out the minutes of the last public meeting held on 12 July 2022.

Proposed : Ronan Cusack

Seconded : Pat Stanton

Matters Arising

Solar pump system has been installed on Ballintubber stream and is working. This is funded by LawPro Community Development Fund Grant with support from IFI. John Campbell and Ronan Cusack co-ordinated the installation.

The Carra LIFE funding allocation for LCCA has been received from the Mayo Co Co.

Lough Carra LIFE Project update by Kieran Flynn, Project Manager

Project Office in Belcarra Community Centre is now furnished.

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Recruitment:

Admin officer, Aisling Burke, has been recruited from within Mayo CoCo and started at the beginning of August. Two posts were advertised and interview take place on 14 September – the Community Admin member and the Ground Water officer. The agri-adviser position went to e-tender but responses not satisfactory so out again and is open until 16 September. The position is for 12 months with potential to renew. Surface Water Officer – not yet filled but expect to get someone soon.

GSI (Geological Survey Ireland) ground water study – finished first round in August and putting data together. Interim report does highlight one particular increase/addition to catchment near Ballyglass – border on NE side is now extended 2km beyond known. It has identified direct underground connection between Ballyglass and Quinn's bay.

Agri env scheme:

There has been a full day meeting earlier today in LIFE office with Teagasc, Dept Ag, LCCA, Mayo CoCo, NPWS - to identify scheme and what to focus on. Once outline ready will go public consultation. Following consultation may be amendments. The scheme will have to work alongside Acres and the model closest is the Pearl Mussel Project which has a result based scheme and whole farm score. The focus is on reducing nutrient pollution getting into lake, biodiversity, protection of existing semi-natural habitats etc. but it is too early to go into detail now.

Monitoring baseline:

There has to be a monitoring schedule throughout the project to track impacts. Baseline study has commenced and Cilian, Chris and Philip have drawn up a revised plan for 2022. There will be a more comprehensive schedule in 2023.

Invasive species control:

Padraig Farrell, IFI and OPW are operating a collaborative approach.

Website:

A designer is currently working on the site. Have project logo. Ready to start social media. All should go live in October. Planning to produce brochures before start planning official launch – Spring 2023.

Question: Have GSI found any link with Moorehall?

Answer: Not yet. This was just their first round of dye tracing, there will be more to come.

Question: How specific are the roles of the Ground Water and Surface Water Officers?

Answer: The Ground Water is a hydrogeologist. Surface Water Officer is freshwater scientist working on all aspects.

Update from NPWS by James Conran

Padraig Farrell has been monitoring movements of the Greylag geese over last few weeks and consideration given to possible control measures but no decision yet. Successful trapping programme for mink and now getting empty traps.

James is setting up a species map on lake shore. Target is to map Irish Whitebeam.

NPWS have had to respond to vandalism at the bat roost. Thankfully there has been no impact on summer roosting site.

There has been local speculation about the issue of NPWS purchasing land around Lough Carra. James read out a statement from NPWS to explain and clarify: The lands concerned are designated and conservation

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worthy and much is made up of bog and annexed heath and limestone pavement which are of limited value to farming. NPWS strategic land purchases which are of high ecological interest with the view to consolidate this with Coillte and Mayo Co Co the state owned land around Lough Carra. The land is not being purchased by the Carra LIFE Project. If NPWS is to purchase land it may be used by LCCA and the Carra LIFE Project for demonstration purposes. There shouldn't be confusion between NPWS and the goals of delivering the Carra LIFE Project.

The Chair of the LCCA commented that there are apparent rumours the LCCA is buying up lands in the catchment. He highlighted for the meeting that LCCA's budget for land purchase is small. Furthermore, the LCCA has to date not put in one single bid on any land around Lough Carra.

Overview of Otter Research Project by Dr Catherine O'Reilly

Dr O'Reilly highlighted that she was making this presentation on behalf of the project of which she is a supervisor.

She mentioned that she was brought up in Castlebar and the daughter of Jimmy O'Reilly from Moorehall. She contacted LCCA to discuss how she might be able to get involved when she and her husband, Peter Turner, moved back to Mayo. Dr O'Reilly did her PhD in genetics and when she moved to the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) she started a molecular ecology group using DNA based techniques to identify Pine Martens from faecal or hair samples – to identify the sex and individual. Over the years have developed DNA techniques at WIT for species including Otter. Also done Lesser horseshoe bat.

NPWS approached WIT to develop project on Lough Carra to look at Mink. Dr O'Reilly is a supervisor of the student, Samirah, who is carrying out this project under Project Leader Sam Bowett.

The plan is to collect faecal samples of Otter which is non-invasive and will not be trapping them. Mink – can use hair from traps being used by NPWS. The project will survey the lake and all the islands to collect Otter spraints so that over the 4 years of project will be able to identify which animals using which parts of the lake and how they move around the lake. No studies have yet been done on Otters on lakes – how they use the space.

With Mink – have some samples from Padraig Farrell – tissue samples. And see how related animals are to each other.

If people have information on where they see Otters using the lake they can provide them to Catherine or to the Project Leader, Sam Bowett. The project would appreciate being given access to the lake shore as much as possible to collect spraints on a regular basis

Question: How plentiful are Otters on the lake.

Answer: Rarely see Otters but there is evidence of their presence. Ferdia, the head mammal person from NPWS found spraints at Moorehall. Chris Huxley saw an Otter off Church Island three days ago.

Schedule of Future Meetings

The Secretary proposed that going forward the LCCA public meetings should be held every second month.

It was acknowledged that there will also be public meetings organised by Carra LIFE in the coming years.

There was general support and agreement from the meeting to adopt this proposal.

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Treasurer's Report

Credit Union current balance : €7,083.54

BoI €131,347.90 –LIFE project funding to be used purchase/lease only and associated expenses.

Accounts are with accountant John Foy to be with Chris before end of the month.

Thanks given grants and donations:

Cllr Al McDonnell donation €1,000

Carra Mask Federation €2000

Any Other Business

IFI did stock assessment of fish in lake a few weeks ago. Chris Huxley and Kieran Flynn met Will Corcoran of IFI and he will come to talk to our November meeting to give presentation on fish stock s over the last twenty years.

Monitoring. Philip Doddy's marl crust booklet explains that quality of the marl crust indicates quality of the water in various parts of the lake. Last weekend went to Annie's where Philip did some experimental work 5 years ago to look at marl crust on the rocks. State of the water there is terrible. Marl has gone and moss growing on rocks. Collected samples from rock surfaces at 100m intervals moving away into the lake. Hope will see gradation of pollution. Moved some rocks from Annie's to Quinn's Bay 5 years ago. They now have marl crust on them so they have recovered. Samples now in freezer to be analysed.

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

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday 28 November in Belcarra Community Centre.

All meeting minutes and other documents relevant to LCCA can be found on the Lough Carra website <http://loughcarra.org/catchment-association/>