

**NATIONAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP ON FLOODING ISSUES
SUSTAINABLE FLOOD MANAGEMENT SUB-GROUP**

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2004, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh.

Present: Alan Burdekin (Scottish Executive (SE), Environment Group, Air, Climate and Engineering Division – chair).

Scottish Executive: William Walker (Environment Group, Air, Climate and Engineering Division – minutes), Debi Garft (Environment Group, Air, Climate and Engineering Division), Gillian Hood (Environment Group, Water Environment Division).

David Howell (Scottish Natural Heritage), Mike Donaghy (Environment LINK), John Greaves (COSLA), David Wilson (Scottish Water (SW)), Prof. Charles Ainger (Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management), David Harley (Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)), Peter Bolton (Consultant).

Apologies: Jonathan Chapman (Environment Agency), Alan Werritty (University of Dundee).

Agenda item 2: Welcome

1. Alan Burdekin (AB) welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their time. He opened by commenting on this morning's media interest in the *Foresight* report. The minutes of the last Sustainable Flood Management Sub-Group meeting were approved, and Debi Garft (DG) went through the action points. In particular, she confirmed that a link to the SE's Sustainable Development Indicators webpage would be distributed to Members after the meeting. Charles Ainger (CA) also highlighted a forthcoming UK conference on sustainable indicators. With regard to action point 5, CA agreed to send the relevant link to Secretariat.

Agenda item 3: Sub-Group remit – amended paper NTAG2004(2)

2. Members approved the amended remit.

Agenda item 4: Designation of responsible authorities under the WEWS Act – paper NTAG2004(20)

3. Gillian Hood (GH) introduced paper NTAG2004(20), explaining that she was looking for advice from Members on the content of a discussion paper on the proposals for the designation of “responsible authorities” under the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003 (“the 2003 Act”). Specifically, she asked for advice on what she might include about the work of this Sub-Group. Members agreed that until a definition and principles have been worked up, there was very little of substance that could be included. David Howell (DHo) suggested that background details on NTAG and this Sub-Group might be useful referring in particular to helping the Executive to address the recommendations made in the COSLA Flooding Task Group Final Report. GH explained that the paper would go out for discussion to the bodies Ministers intended to designate as “responsible authorities” but added that no specific deadline had been set for completion of the paper. GH

confirmed that she could wait until after a definition and principles have been agreed upon. She suggested that the responses from “responsible authorities” to the paper could be fed back into NTAG. CA commented that this feedback would provide valuable evidence as to the viability of the SFM sub-group outputs.

Agenda item 5: Best practice seminar on sustainable flood management hosted by SNH

4. DHo circulated the SNH Sharing Good Practice programme of events for 2004-05 leaflet, and also a draft programme for the 17 June sustainable flood management seminar in this series. DHo took Members through the sustainable flood management programme, highlighting the slot for NTAG’s work to be presented. He welcomed further speaker/case study suggestions, and advice on how the afternoon workshops should operate. David Wilson (DW) offered a 10 minute case study presentation from Scottish Water (SW). DHo explained that SNH has received 15-20 notes of interest in the seminar to-date and places are likely to be limited to between 60 and 80. He explained that it is important to get a balance of people with a background/interest in the subject and that the event has been set up to encourage discussion rather than take a more technical/scientific approach of a conference format. He confirmed that SNH’s John Thomson will chair the event.

5. DHo agreed that it was important that the River Restoration Centre presentation was relevant. He explained that the event would not push the environmental agenda in isolation and there will be a balance between environmental issues and social and economic needs.

6. AB suggested that a presentation on the *Foresight* Initiative be held back in preparation for a full Scottish launch later in the year. It was agreed however that members of the *Foresight* team should be invited to the event, if it was appropriate.

7. It was noted that Elgin did not have a formal flooding community group, but that it would not be difficult to find representatives from the community who would be willing to discuss the impacts of the Elgin flood prevention scheme. MD highlighted a project in Clackmannanshire where the local authority is attempting to implement a sustainable flood management model. DHo agreed that this would provide a good topic for debate.

8. CA said that it is important that participants know how feedback from the event will be incorporated into the work of NTAG. DHo confirmed that feedback from the seminar will be written up and presented to NTAG on 5 August and he suggested that the feedback should be posted on NTAG’s website.

9. Members agreed that it is important that participants know that NTAG’s work on sustainable flood management is on-going. AB said that receiving feedback at this stage will ensure that the Sub-Group takes a balanced approach to sustainable flood management.

10. CA suggested that “tackling flood risk in Scotland” on the programme at 10.30 should be “Why should flood risk be tackled?” He added that the programme does not ask why sustainable flood management is such an important topic. He suggested that this question would give the day a purpose and a focus.

Action point 1: DHo to arrange for feedback from the event to be presented to NTAG on 5 August. Secretariat to arrange for feedback to be posted on the website.

Agenda item 6: Consider existing definitions/guidance relating to sustainable flood management

WWF Scotland

11. MD introduced a draft version of WWF Scotland's definition of Sustainable Flood Management. He asked Members to note that the report is underpinned by a catchment-based approach working with natural processes. The paper also considers how, as a last resort, harder engineering solutions can be utilised most effectively, both in terms of abating flooding, and also in minimising their negative impacts on the environment.

12. DHo observed that the report was a good starting point and showed how we should represent the environmental aspects of sustainable flood management. He added that the challenge now is to decide how the other facets of sustainable flood management can be most effectively linked into the outcomes from this report.

13. The issue of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) for wetland flooding purposes was briefly raised. AB agreed to consult SE solicitors to establish whether CPOs could be used in this way.

Action point 2: AB to consult SE solicitors to establish whether CPOs could be used to free up wetland for flooding purposes.

14. MD accepted that in its current format, the report contains no objectives, and therefore nothing to measure whether sustainable flood management is achieved. He pointed out that the final document would end with real life examples, from which he hoped measurements might be made.

15. DW highlighted a section of the paper supporting the implementation of Flood Liaison Advice Groups (FLAGs) across Scotland. He explained that following the Shettleston floods in 2002; SW has set up Flood Technical Groups (FTG) to complement the works of FLAGs. The FTGs are sponsored by SW, but chaired by local authorities, and meet roughly every 2 months. He added that a mechanism should be established for FTGs to report to FLAGs, and that FTGs should be rolled out across Scotland.

RSPB Scotland

16. Members received a copy of the RSPB leaflet *Go With the Flow: The Natural Approach to Sustainable Flood Management in Scotland*. MD gave a brief introduction, citing the report's emphasis on the potential use of wetlands for alleviating flood risk. DHa commented that there is a lack of hard data to support the use of upstream storage as a means of addressing flooding. AB agreed and explained *Foresight* recognises this. He added that the Executive has commissioned a study to look at the potential for catchments to deal naturally with flooding and may prove helpful in providing an answer to how effective upstream storage can be. CA remarked that when considering how best to tackle flood risk, the decision-making process precludes upstream catchment methods due to a lack of hard data regarding effectiveness. He suggested that local authorities might need guidance to help them to consider this option fully. Members recognised that the current process naturally leads to harder engineering solutions. DW added that SW is pushing soft engineering solution as far as possible in Glasgow.

Agenda item 7: Draft a pragmatic definition of sustainable flood management for use within the context of section 2 of the 2003 Act, along with objectives and a set of principles for practitioners to apply – Paper NTAG2004(19)

17. AB asked for comments on paper NTAG2004(19) from Members. MD said that whilst the objectives and principles laid out in NTAG2004(19) looked towards proactively addressing sustainable flood management, the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be used as measurements of sustainability appeared to be done in the context of a previous flood event. He questioned the use of the term “resilience” to describe the overall response process to a flood event, explaining that it can be interpreted in a number of different ways. He was concerned that “resilience” would be taken to mean hard engineering rather than a more eco-friendly approach.

18. CA explained that linking “resilience” to the 4 ‘A’s would make it clear that the definition for sustainable flood management agreed by Members would be much more than merely traditional engineering solutions. DW commented that experience shows property owners are generally unwilling to relocate, preferring resilience measures as a chosen option. He explained that “resilience” has been adopted by the National Flooding Forum as a means of addressing all aspects of flooding.

19. John Greaves (JG) stated that the primary purpose of any guidance should be to protect communities from the adverse affects of flooding, and that this aim should be at the core of the objectives. CA said that the draft objectives should clarify what is to be achieved, not how they should be achieved. Members agreed that the objectives should be redrafted and these should cover social, economic, environmental and future generation elements.

20. After detailed discussion, Members agreed that the following draft definition for sustainable flood management, within the meaning of section 2 of the 2003 Act:

“Take a long-term, whole life, catchment and coastline based approach to provide the maximum possible social and economic resilience against flooding; working with natural processes in a way that is equitable and affordable for our present and future generations.”

Action point 3: Secretariat to revise objectives in paper NTAG2004(19) in light of comments at paragraph 19.

21. Members briefly discussed future funding and possible need for prioritisation of schemes.

22. CA stated that the sustainable flood management objectives agreed by NTAG will inevitably become part of prioritisation methodology in the future. He suggested that it might be a good time to tailor objectives with future prioritisation in mind. MD explained that a more sustainable approach to flood management might lower the overall cost of a scheme and is likely to mean that costs are spread over a longer period of time. This would become resolved from the cost benefit analysis of the available options.

23. Members briefly discussed the sustainable flood management draft principles set out in NTAG2004(19), DG confirming that they comprised a consolidation of the common themes running through the publications previously considered by the Sub-Group. It was

agreed that Members should give the principles further consideration, and forward any comments to Secretariat by Friday 30 April 2004.

Action point 4: Members to forward any comments on the SFM draft principles laid out in paper NTAG2004(19) by Friday 30 April 2004.

Agenda item 8: Consider indicators for measuring sustainable flood management. Paper NTAG2004(21).

24. Members decided that key performance indicators should be considered at a later meeting once the objectives had been further developed.

Agenda item 9: Consider how technical guidance on sustainable flood management might be produced.

25. Members agreed that the Guidance Sub-Group should consider how technical guidance on sustainable flood management (for taking forward flood prevention schemes under the Flood Prevention (Scotland) Act 1961) might be taken forward. Peter Bolton indicated that he would be happy to help anyone contracted to undertake the work.

Action point 5: Guidance Sub-Group to consider how guidance on sustainable flood management might be taken forward.

Agenda item 10: AOB

26. Members had no further business to discuss.

Agenda item 11: Date of next meeting

Action point 6: Secretariat to confirm 27 July 2004 as a suitable date for the next Sustainable Flood Management Sub-Group meeting.

**NTAG Secretariat
June 2004**