

WHAT STAGE IS THE STUDY AT?

In the period since the last Project Newsletter was issued (Newsletter No.3, September 2020), the Lifford FRS Steering Group (comprising of the OPW, Donegal County Council, RPS and Ryan Hanley) held the Opening Collaborative Workshop (via video conference), which was attended by thirty-two stakeholders representing public sector bodies. The main aims of the workshop were to identify and discuss any issues, constraints and opportunities that could inform the development of the Scheme; and to identify any features that could be considered to create multiple benefits. The Workshop was successful

in meeting these aims, with good engagement between attendees during useful and informative discussions. A report summarising the discussions has been completed and will be used to inform future stages of the project.

RPS (Engineering Consultants) have completed the construction of a computer model to simulate the rivers within the study area (Finn, Foyle, Mourne and Dee), based on data acquired during a detailed river and terrain survey (completed in August 2020). The computer model is being calibrated to ensure that it is representative of the flooding mechanisms in Lifford.

Ryan Hanley (Environmental Consultants) completed the Environmental Constraints Study report which assesses the key environmental issues which may be impacted by, or impose constraints on, the flood scheme. The report considers Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna, Soils and Geology, Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage, Land Use and Material Assets, Landscape and Visual Impact, in addition to Population and Human Health. Preliminary walkover surveys have been completed to confirm the presence of a range of (internationally) important and legally protected species and their habitats within the study area. These include grey seals and otters as shown in the photographs below.

An Invasive Species Management Plan (ISMP) is being prepared in conjunction with the OPW. This plan defines the location and quantifies the spread of Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam. The OPW and Donegal County Council are to resume control treatment of this Giant Hogweed as soon as easing of COVID19 work restrictions permits. It is important that this undertaken as invasive species spread quickly, with adverse ecological and environmental effects.

IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID19)

The Office of Public Works has identified the Lifford FRS Steering Group as providing an essential service to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some members of the Steering Group have visited the study area, as part of the delivery of this essential service, whilst adhering fully with all relevant government regulations and guidance in relation to COVID-19. The Steering Group continues to meet via video conferencing facilities in order to comply with government guidance.

OUTLINE SCHEME PROGRAMME

		Outline Scheme Programme									
Activity		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	
Stage 1	Data Collection and surveys	█									
	Hydrological Analysis		█								
	Hydraulic Analysis		█								
	Scheme analysis & development			█							
Stage 2	Public Exhibition				█						
Stage 3	Detailed design of Scheme					█					
	Confirmation by Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform						█				
Stage 4	Construction works							█			
Stage 5	Scheme Operational									█	

Timelines provided as current best estimate, but are subject to revision.

NEXT STEPS

Hydrological Analysis: The hydrological analysis provides the necessary inputs to the hydraulic model in order to allow simulation of a range of flooding scenarios. The analysis will be completed following calibration of the hydraulic model.

Hydraulic Analysis: After the hydraulic model has been calibrated and validated using data from historical flood events to ensure that it provides an accurate representation of the flooding mechanisms, it will be used to assess and compare various engineered options which will reduce the flood risk in Lifford.

Scheme Analysis and Development: The Steering Group are reviewing potential locations to undertake a site investigation (in the form of excavated trial pits) in order to better understand the ground conditions where the scheme may be constructed. Following completion of the site investigation and hydraulic analysis, an assessment will be undertaken which will facilitate identification of the flood relief scheme.

Environmental Assessment: Preliminary ecological baseline surveys and studies have identified the need for more detailed up to date information on a range of (internationally) important and legally protected species and their habitats within the study area. Specialist surveys will be undertaken from spring to summer 2021 to provide detailed data on aquatic ecology, river water quality, salmon and other fish species, otters and bat species, as well as breeding birds.