



Your reference
Our reference

Sent by email to

Helen.Venn@theoep.org.uk
Cc.
kerry.anderson@daera-ni.gov.uk and
karl.beattie@daera-ni.gov.uk

20 July 2022

Water Policy
Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Gasworks Business Park
Belfast BT7 2JA
Telephone: 028 90 569824

Dear Helen,

3rd Cycle River Basin Management Plan for Northern Ireland

In response to your letter dated 22nd June 2022 I wanted to take the opportunity to update you on the progress being made on the publication of the 3rd Cycle River Basin Management Plan for Northern Ireland and to re-assure you of our commitment to ensuring that all environmental matters are dealt with in a timely manner.

As you know under the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 there is an obligation to publish plans by 21 December 2021. The publication of the Third Cycle Final River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) also requires the completion of an economic analysis report as a supporting document, which accompanies the final plans.

The Department did publish a draft River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) under The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 (SR2017/81). The draft RBMP was published on 09 April 2021 with the six month consultation phase closing on 10 October 2021 with consultation on the draft plan providing an opportunity to make further refinements and improvements to the proposed measures.

On 15th June 2021 Minister Poot's, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs minister agreed to an extension to the delivery date of the plan until 9th April 2022. The reasoning was due to staff working on the new plans having been diverted to work on Covid-19 related issues during the past year that has given rise to slippage in the timetable.

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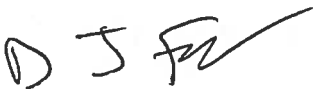


In the intervening period, there have been two recruitment exercises to identify the relevant expertise to complete the required Economic Assessment however, both these attempts have been unsuccessful and it wasn't until March 2022 that the Department was able to recruit an Environmental Economist. This delay meant that the expected 9th April completion date for the publication of the RBMPs was not achieved as previously expected.

Departmental officials wrote to Minister Poot's advising of this further delay advising that the publication of the final plans would be delayed until the end of September 2022. The Minister agreed to the extension, but commented that he does not want to see any further delays in the publication.

In seeking to progress this matter it should be noted that due to the cross cutting nature of the RBMP it will require Northern Ireland Executive sign off, which is currently not possible due to the Executive not being in place. Consideration is being given to a Ministerial write round to all Ministers should the Executive still not be in place in due course.

Yours Sincerely



Dave Foster
Director of Regulatory and Natural Resources Policy
Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Gasworks Business Park
Lower Ormeau Road
Malone Lower
BELFAST BT7 2JA



+44 (0)28 9056 9552



+44 (0)7766 477 540



dave.foster@daera-ni.gov.uk

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