



**Date:** 7 January 2025

Right to Know

[requests@righttoknow.ie](mailto:requests@righttoknow.ie)

**Re: AIE request AIE-14-01-2024**

Dear RTK,

I refer to your request which you made under the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007 to 2018 (S.I. No. 133 of 2007, S.I. No. 662 of 2011, S.I. 615 of 2014 and S.I. No. 309 of 2018) (hereafter referred to as the AIE Regulations) for access to records held by the Office of Public Works relating to:

*Under the AIE Regs to request the agendas, minutes and any related meeting presentations or reports provided to or by the following Groups within Met Eireann*

- National Flood Forecasting & Warning Service Steering Group*
- Communications Working Group (CWG)*
- Comms Technical Sub-Group*

*For the purpose of this AIE please consider the date range for meetings of the groups within 2023-2024.*

As you are aware from the initial acknowledgement letter of 18 November 2024, I am the decision-maker dealing with your request and may be contacted at [bryan.sheehan@opw.ie](mailto:bryan.sheehan@opw.ie)

Due to the large volume of work required of your request, I was unable to make a final decision on your request within one month from the date on which the request was received. Accordingly, under Article 7 (2) (b) of the AIE Regulations, I extended the timeframe for dealing with your request by one further month in my letter dated 6 December 2024. I undertook to notify you of my decision as soon as possible, but at the latest by 7 January 2025.



## Background

In January 2016, the Government agreed to establish a National Flood Forecast Warning Service (NFFWS). International experience shows that developing a NFFWS is an iterative process over an extended timeframe and it was decided to develop the NFFWS in a staged basis. A Steering Group, chaired by the OPW and comprising representatives from Met Éireann, the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (NDFEM) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, was established to steer, support and oversee the establishment of the new service over the initial establishment years.

Phase I – the establishment phase of the Service, is completed and a Flood Forecasting Centre is now operational within Met Éireann in their offices at Glasnevin, in Dublin. The Steering Group for the NFFWS is working on Stage II of the development of the NFFWS to enhance and extend the Service.

## Summary of Decision

I made a decision on your request on 7 January 2025.

Firstly, your request sought records relating to the Communications Working Group. The Communications Working Group did not meet during the period in question and there were no records identified relevant to your request.

Your request also sought records relating to a “Comms Technical Sub-Group.” No such Sub-Group has been established in respect of the development of the NFFWS. In this regard, there were no records identified relevant to your request.

In relation to the National Flood Forecasting & Warning Service Steering Group I have identified a significant number of records in relation to agendas, minutes and related meeting presentations or reports provided to or by the Group and I have considered each of these documents for the purposes of your request against the definition of “environmental information” contained in Regulation 3(1) (a) to (f) as follows:  
*“environmental information” means any information in written, visual, aural, electronic or any other material form on—*

*(a) the state of the elements of the environment, such as air and atmosphere, water, soil, land, landscape and natural sites including wetlands, coastal and marine areas, biological diversity and its components, including genetically modified organisms and the interaction among these elements,*



*(b) factors, such as substances, energy, noise, radiation or waste, including radioactive waste, emissions, discharges and other releases into the environment, affecting or likely to affect the elements of the environment,*

*(c) measures (including administrative measures), such as policies, legislation, plans, programmes, environmental agreements, and activities affecting or likely to affect the elements and factors referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) as well as measures or activities designed to protect those elements,*

*(d) reports on the implementation of environmental legislation,*

*(e) cost-benefit and other economic analyses and assumptions used within the framework of the measures and activities referred to in paragraph (c), and*

*(f) the state of human health and safety, including the contamination of the food chain, where relevant, conditions of human life, cultural sites and built structures inasmuch as they are, or may be, affected by the state of the elements of the environment referred to in paragraph (a) or, through those elements, by any of the matters referred to in paragraphs (b) and (c);”*

I have also considered the AIE Guidelines of the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government issued under Article 14 of the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007 to 2011, Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on Public Access to Environmental Information (the AIE Directive), the Aarhus Convention and associated Implementation Guide, and have had regard to some relevant published decisions of the Commissioner for Environmental Information.

The work of the National Flood Forecasting & Warning Service Steering Group is on guiding, supporting and overseeing the establishment and development of the National Flood Forecasting & Warning Service. The Service is not designed to protect the environment. The Service does not affect nor is it likely to affect, the environment. The records do not relate to the elements, or state of the elements, of the environment or releases into the environment or the state of human health and safety.

I have concluded that the information requested and contained in the records in relation to the National Flood Forecasting & Warning Service Steering Group does not comprise information that satisfies the definition of environmental information set out in Regulation 3(1) paragraphs (a) to (f). Having regard to the foregoing, your request for information under the AIE Regulations on the National Flood Forecasting & Warning Service Steering Group is refused.



### **Right of review**

Under Article 11 of the AIE Regulations, you have a right to request an internal review of this decision. An internal review involves a complete reconsideration of the matter by a member of the staff of this Department, unconnected with the original decision, of the same or higher rank than the original decision-maker, who may affirm, vary or annul the original decision.

If you wish to request an internal review, you can do so by writing to AIE Officer, referring to this decision, quoting the AIE reference number to the following:

AIE Officer  
AIE Unit/FOI Unit  
Office of Public Works  
Jonathan Swift Street  
Trim,  
Co. Meath  
C15 NX36 or [aie@opw.ie](mailto:aie@opw.ie)

This request must be made within one month of the date of receipt of this decision.

The decision of an internal review will be communicated to you within one month of receipt of your request for an internal review.

Please contact me at [bryan.sheehan@opw.ie](mailto:bryan.sheehan@opw.ie) or 046-940 7260 if I can assist you in any matter relating to your request.

Yours sincerely,

*Bryan Sheehan*

Bryan Sheehan  
Higher Executive Officer  
Flood Risk Management -Policy Section