



Plenary Meeting No. 53 (Hybrid)
Tuesday 12th September 2023
Agreed Minutes

Attendees: **In person:** Matt Crowe (Chair), Connie Rochford, Martin McEnroe, Gerald Quain, Dominic Cronin, Issy Petrie
On zoom: Jean Rosney, Paul O’Brien, Keith Hyland, Tim Butter, Sinead O’Brien, Ollan Herr, Denis Drennan, Bernadette Connolly, Barry Deane, Tim Fenn, Liam Berney, Neil Walker, Suzanne Linnane

Apologies: David Wright, Brendan Fitzsimons, Charles Stanley Smith, Derrie Dillon, Elaine McGoff, Siobhan Ward

In Attendance: Donal Purcell, Gretta McCarron, Triona McGrath & Aisling Corkery

No.	Details	Summary	Action
1.0	Welcome & Apologies	The Chair welcomed members to the meeting & apologies were noted.	
1.1	Consideration of minutes of last meeting	The minutes of the Plenary meeting held on the 11 th July were approved.	Minutes to be placed on website.
2.0	Corporate Issues	<p>2.1 Update on the Forums expenditure to 31st June</p> <p>Expenditure YTD: The SEO referenced the AFU Expenditure breakdown circulated to the members in advance of the meeting with total expenditure for the year to date is €359,106.</p> <p>Correspondence (circulated from <i>Climate Change Advisory Council Secretariat & DHLGH re WPAC membership</i>)</p> <p>WPAC membership: DHLGH currently re-establishing the membership of WPAC and have requested if Dr Matt Crowe would represent the Forum on WPAC.</p> <p>The Chair explained that he was happy to represent the Forum on this Committee & that he was aware that there is a distinct role of AFU that needs to be protected. He explained that currently when AFU is invited to attend WPAC meetings the Rep(s) must leave when the Forums advice has been presented. The Chair explained that we need to protect the Forums statutory role but ensure we have an ear to what is being said for the entire meeting and not have to rely on brief minutes.</p>	Secretariat & Chair to explore further, engage with the DHLGH & to draft up a

No.	Details	Summary	Action
		<p>Members agreed that the idea had merit & that it would be a good opportunity to be part of WPAC & to bring the Forum views directly to the table.</p> <p>However, some members expressed concern that as an independent statutory body how can the Forum have an advisory role on one hand & also be a member of WPAC at the same time.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Chair & Executive would give this more thought & to review the document the Forum submitted to the Dept in 2022 re proposed engagements between AFU & WPAC & to also engage with the DHLGH Officials on it.</p> <p>Recommendations for Climate & Water to the CCAC Email from the Secretariat of CCAC expressing interest in meeting with the Forum to discuss the forums recommendations on Climate & water. Members welcomed this request.</p> <p>Forum Membership: The SEO updated the members in regard to the nominations of members to the Forum for the period 2024-27:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominating bodies have been contacted • Liaising and following up with Sectors and Organisations • 8 Members nominated to date <p><u>Discussion:</u> How many people are due to leave at the end of the year, if there are too many should we delay some of these to prevent a big turnover? Officially everyone is eligible for a second term, ideally need to manage between getting some change and having continuity.</p> <p>From the consumers positions, are we looking to have a third consumer member, we need a good overlap? The department have to follow up with Stateboards re the process for appointment of a third consumer rep.</p> <p>Future Plenary meeting dates October 24th, December 5th</p>	<p>paper on it for the Forum to consider.</p>
3.0	Research & Policy	<p>Water Conservation Meeting with Minister The Chair updated the meeting on the meeting held with the AFU delegation & Ministers O'Brien & Noonan on between Meeting on 12th July last. He explained that the Ministers were very well informed about the policy brief and had a lot of questions, especially for Dr Cotterill.</p> <p>The Chair explained that it was great to have the two ministers present and to have Dr Cotterill there for the Research input. The next Step is to have meeting re water Conservation & the Building Regs. Team congratulated for their excellent work on this.</p> <p>Uisce Eireann CIP Submission The Research Lead provided an update on this submission which was previously approved by the members online. Consultation period was from 31st July to 8th Sept. It was a stakeholder consultation not public consultation. Forum will have another</p>	

No.	Details	Summary	Action
		<p>chance at public consultation via CRU. We received a letter acknowledging the submission.</p> <p>Topics included for Recommendations: Transparency, Water Conservation, UWW, Future Proofing Appendix (Opex Investment): Water conservation, customer communications, resourcing, publicly sourced GWSs, urban wastewater storm overflow assessments. We will be able to use this work again for other submissions.</p> <p>SE RWRP – 12-week Consultation period to 3rd Oct The Research Lead explained that the recommendations include: Demand management/water conservation, future proofing, data transparency, sustainable provision of high quality water services</p> <p>RBMP Still in a holding position.</p> <p>Research Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Participation project meeting with presentation on preliminary findings was held on Friday. Looked at National and International studies and interviews. • Draft Report due Early October. • Workshop to talk through learnings of project and bring LAWPRO to Workshop – probably November. • Useful meeting in terms of additional people required to interview. • Outputs of research gives Forum a chance to think about this – it is worth thinking about who we want to advise from this research. • SL: Participation is very well defined internationally. However, in Ireland it is not clear and different people have different understanding of what it is. <p><u>Discussion</u> Confusion about what public participation is, and that consultation was participation. This needs to be highlighted to DHLGH.</p> <p>Barry Deane explained that there were huge learnings from levels of public participation in GWS and in the community. As part of any review/research the federation would be happy to contribute our learnings. –Comment from SL: 3 members of the NFGWS were interviewed.</p> <p>Water Consumer Survey Interactions Research commissioned for National Survey – 1500 respondents Targeted survey to GWS – 177 respondents, this is enough to do good analysis. Propose to present to Plenary in October, results are of interest to everybody and could shape future research for next year (re communications or customer service)</p>	<p>SE RWRP to be circulated to the Members</p> <p>Chair will talk to Department re RBMP next week to get an update.</p>

No.	Details	Summary	Action
		<p>- Media outlets could be very interested in this also, so this needs to be factored into a communications plan.</p> <p>Programme for Government Water Commitments Identify barriers to progressing/achieving these commitments Identify emerging water related issues. Tender issued and 2 applications received, will be assessed and offered by the end of the week.</p> <p><u>Research Discussion</u> Chair: Wide variety of research covering 3 very different topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Water is an area where we have a bit of a gap in the Forum, we need to be informing ourselves in order to participate in discussions going forward, give some thought to this in terms of future research. • Consider doing research in removing pharmaceutical from UWW. - Pharma has a lot of research going on already and we are talking to DCU on this. There is a full PhD researching separated urine – we will look into this from a policy perspective. • Forum member commented that it is really satisfying that the research is becoming very strong and that it is being taken seriously by the Minister. <p>Chair: Might be worth having a look at advice on the new UWWTD</p>	<p>BD to give presentation to Forum on Rural Water at WSSC meeting - Forum can attend.</p>
4.0	<p>Education and Communications Actions</p>	<p>Communications and Education Update Communication Plan and Audit 2 Responses - will let them know at the end of the week who has been awarded the tender. Will start work on 2nd October.</p> <p>Land Use Review Workshop NESC, EPA and Mark Scott UCD to present Facilitation company contacted to run workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to know members availability <p>Member has requested safe venues for meeting in person given Covid is on the increase, idea of a larger room to give people more space)</p> <p>Design and Print services tender assessment to be completed this week. IAS press release in Irish Times “letter to the editor”.</p> <p>Education Completed report on TY Module – 4 topics, each topic has 4 lesson plans and resources for teachers Trialled in 4 schools in the Midwest. Needs to be split into smaller modules as it was difficult to get through it all in TY as this is a very busy year. It can link in with TY, LC or JC curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases student skill - Has shared with scoilnet.ie - Will bring it to BTYSE - Modules on Pollution and Aquatic life are also appropriate for Post Leaving Cert Sources 	<p>11th or 12th Oct to be confirmed.</p> <p>Chair: have a look to see if there any teacher conferences that we can promote TY module at.</p>

No.	Details	Summary	Action
		<p>- Would like to get the material designed so that it looks better - Will also be available on our website</p> <p><u>Discussion</u> How do we maximise the uptake in schools, is there a way of tracking this? – We will be able to see the PowerPoint downloads from our website/YouTube videos. Teacher have Inservice days and science networks to distribute Getting Science and Geography teachers involved is a great way to go</p> <p>BTYSE in January There will be a Water Award again this year. Need members to help with stand. Interactive Questionnaire for students to answer. Two companies interested in developing the technology.</p>	
5.0	Action Plan	<p>Water Conservation – Key Action 2023 Complete – continued engagement with department, recommendations to UE. Engagement with CCAC</p> <p>RBMP – Key Actions 2023 Review Impact once Plan is published. Engagement with key agencies on implementation of plan (2024)</p> <p>Public Participation – Key Action 2023 Continue research and follow-on next year with engagement.</p> <p>Water Services - Key Actions 2023 Letter to UE sent Forum position based on UWW research to be developed Rural Water – obvious gaps. Tobin report is finalised but not available. – potential research in the new year.</p> <p>Water and Climate – Key Actions 2023 Research complete, report in development. Water and Climate conference postponed as there have been a number of conferences on this topic – Replacing with the Land Use Workshop Recommendations to CARO, CCAC etc based on research.</p> <p>Policy Coherence Ongoing through all our work and submissions. Develop position paper in the future (2024)</p> <p>2024 Proposed Key Focus Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RBMP Implementation • Public Participation • Rural Water Review – AFU position • UE on transparency and customer comms • CRU CIP • Ongoing water conservation. • Research PFG outputs 	Contact Dept to request access to Tobin Report.

No.	Details	Summary	Action
		<p><u>Discussion</u></p> <p>EPA has just put out it's hydrology map – in terms of abstraction, we shouldn't forget this as an important impact. Is this a gap in our research?</p> <p>Water Abstractions is a big issue in relation to angling, in particular trout & salmon. More pollution and less water & Oxygen. Big issue for marine life in river even if water drops for two weeks. We need to get some speaker in on this and have a policy on this. Dept are currently drafting the regulations on this.</p> <p>RBMP – we have to acknowledge that we might need to make another submission in this. Timing has moved on & the strategy has remained the same.</p> <p>Source Risk Assessments – link to DWD on this, they need to both marry together and have no contradictions.</p>	<p>Get EPA to update on new abstraction Licensing and New Data</p>
6.0	AOB	<p>Chair explained that the Working group on Water with DAFM set up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It's been asked to develop ideas on improving knowledge and education - Nitrates Directive need further work on this and adherence to WFD i.e., Policy coherence. - To support the Nitrates Action Plans - The material will go to NAP working group and public consultation (Forum can make submission on this) - Forum needs to contribute on the Nitrates positions - If there's going to be public consultation on this during the year, we need to format a position on this now. There may be some agreement and sectoral consensus – Any thoughts? <p>Issue with Forum being on DAFM Working Group, can we discuss this.</p> <p>Nitrates Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair explained that this is a complex issue, if we are going to draft a new policy, we need to do some homework on this. Taking on board the views of Farmers and Environmental Groups – how do we come to a compromise on this, proper advice required? • Serious situation, we must protect the income of farmers yet this is what is being threatened. Pilot demonstration project to train cattle to urinate in designated zone. Income to farmers for N recovery. • Serious issue, however, we need to work together to find a way to go forward. Consequences of slow action to face issues. People of leadership/influence need to show the way. • From a farmer point of view, we need to talk to the ACP, we really need to educate ourselves on what they are researching. They see they effects of all the impacts. Can't see the reduction in numbers having an impact on water quality. There are far more effective regs that would have an 	<p>Chair would like to propose the CMSC has a meeting on the Nitrate Directive and what should happen in relation to policy/policy coherence.</p>

No.	Details	Summary	Action
		<p>effect on WQ. This is more targeted at reducing cattle number for climate reasons. Need to look at models, it is modelled that cutting numbers won't improve WQ.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we are going to make recommendations, we need to educate ourselves first on what are the most effective measures. • Emotive issue on farms. Farmers frustrated that changes implemented have not been given time to work. From a farm point of view, it will have a huge negative effect on the industry. • There is an issue with slurry but also spreading of synthetic nitrogen. If this stops it would take the pressure of farmers to reduce cattle numbers. Chair: good example of question one might ask. • There is not one solution to this. Other pressures involving the price of milk and there's been disposal of milk at WWTPs already. Seeing the eutrophication increase year on year is frustrating. We need to show leadership, we are here to improve WQ and the WFD is the best policy it can be. • We should be slow to use what we have already used; this is evolving all the time. ACP has not been accepted by the EPA. For the first time there's trout and salmon in local streams adjacent to intensive farming, this is a pure river and we are not getting the credit for this. UE need to be given credit too. (Chair: not true the EPA doesn't recognise ACP) <p>Everyone here is interested in water but we are not technical experts, our role is to give policy advice. We could identify some areas of common ground. Looking at the 2021 position, there is common ground. We could pose questions about how this is being carried out. We are getting into the social-political side here and we may not always come up with solutions, but we can ask questions that can challenge opinions. A small course direction sooner rather than later will make things better in the long run.</p> <p>We have never made recommendations on the Derogations – Complexity exists in this landscape, we don't know what impact reduction will have. Policy and Policy Coherence is where we can add some value.</p> <p>National IAS Committee: Martin McEnroe updated the meeting that the 3rd IAS Meeting is taking place in September. They are holding 2 workshops on draft plans, Dublin (24th Oct - Spencer hotel) and Limerick (26th Oct – Clayton Hotel). This is timely, hoping to have plan in place by Q1 2024</p>	<p>Look at possibility of having a CMSC Meeting on Tuesday 3rd Oct to Discuss Nitrates – preference for in-person meeting to discuss nitrates issue with expert input</p>
7.0	Next meeting	Tuesday 24th October 2023 at 10.30am in the Ashling Hotel, Dublin	