



Plenary Meeting No. 54 (Hybrid)
Tuesday 24th October 2023
Agreed Minutes

Attendees:

In person: Matt Crowe (Chair), Connie Rochford, Martin McEnroe, Gerald Quain, Dominic Cronin, Paul O’Brien, Keith Hyland, Sinead O’Brien, Denis Drennan, Neil Walker, Dr Suzanne Linnane, Charles Stanley Smith, Derrie Dillon, Dr Elaine McGoff.

On zoom: David Wright, Tim Butter, Siobhan Ward, Jean Rosney, Barry Deane

Apologies: Ollan Herr, Issy Petrie, Bernadette Connolly, Tim Fenn, Liam Berney, Brendan Fitzsimons

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

Presenting: Ted Massey DAFM, Marie Archbold DHLGH, Donal Daly, Eddie Burgess Teagasc & Mathew Craig EPA

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 12 th September were approved.	Minutes to be placed on website.
2.0	Corporate Issues	<p>2.1 Update on the Forums expenditure to 31st September</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 €415, 147. Discussed projections to year end (also circulated).</p> <p>Correspondence Written to Climate Change Advisory Council and a meeting will be held on 29th November @ 2:30pm on Zoom, all members are invited to attend. Introduce AFU and present our Climate research. Update on what they are doing and discuss areas of common interest. Chair: Happy we could make the submission to the CCAC this year which facilitated this engagement.</p>	CCAC meeting 29 th November @ 2:30pm on Zoom
3.0		<p>3.1 Policy Issues</p> <p>To consider response to invitation from DHLGH for the Forum Chair to be a member of WPAC. (see attached paper) Engaged with Department; proposal for the AFU Chair to be appointed as Ex-officio member of WPAC to attend and advise, Department is agreeable with this suggestion.</p>	

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		<p>Discussion: The Forum will maintain its independence, the Ex-officio role is advisory. It will be useful to be there for the whole meeting, then the Forum can refine or give advice on other issues.</p> <p>This will be an experimental structure between WPAC and AFU with regards to engagement. Advice will be restricted to policy positions the Forum has agreed. The Forum will be able to see the agenda prior to WPAC meetings and give input for the Chair to give to WPAC on any issues.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Ex-Officio role of the Chair on WPAC should be reviewed after 1 year to consider how it works. It was agreed that this was a good idea both from a Forum point of view and for full members of WPAC.</p> <p>Members query re why the Chair of the Forum was not previously on WPAC? – Explained that there is now a better understanding of what the Forum is about. Forum has evolved and is now a statutory body. Members queried if it would be possible to have a Sub Ex-Officio member if the Chair is unavailable.</p> <p>3.2 To consider response to invitation from LAWPRO for Forum Rep to be an Observer on Oversight Committee (document attached & circulated for the meeting) Will give the Forum up to date info on the issues that LAWPRO are facing and be able to bring this to WPAC. Chair: would be good to have engagement as an observer – will discuss further at next meeting.</p> <p>3.3 To note the recent submissions on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UE Southeast Water Resources Plan. • DHLGH Draft Water Policy Statement. <p>To note consultation on UE Water Services Strategic Plan - Issues Paper</p>	<p>Proposal adopted. Notify the DHLGH</p>
4.0		<p>The Chair welcomed the speakers and introduced the Nitrates Directive Overview of the Nitrates Directive - Marie Archbold, DHLGH. Monitoring and Water Quality Report to support Nitrates Derogation Reporting – Mathew Craig, EPA</p> <p>Please see summary notes of these presentations in separate document.</p> <p>Q & A - Nitrates Directive Policy & Monitoring & Water Quality Report How can I find out if a farm is in derogation? Response: That is personal data, DAFM doesn't release a list of derogation farms. Some farms are not granted a derogation.</p> <p>What is eutrophic? Do you measure if zebra mussels are eating the algae? Response: Eutrophic is defined by the EU commission and is harmonised by the WFD. If you are poor/bad status you are eutrophic, moderate status might be eutrophic.</p> <p>Invasives are an issue and does mask WQ issues but we look at the rivers too and this is a better indication of what is happening in the whole catchment</p>	

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		<p>Farmer have to report to DAFM for slurry exports? Can we not regulate this better? Response: Everyone with a grass land stocking rate above 100kg will be obliged to use low emission. DAFM and EPA are currently looking at export/import campaigns, so there will be tightening up on this. DAFM moved to an online system where both imports/exports must be recorded. However, speaking to advisors this is not always what is happening on the ground. Discussions have been productive and there are measures being put in place to resolve this.</p> <p>Apportionment from tillage farms, is it one size fits all? Response: EPA gets tillage information from Dept of Agriculture and we model based on this – will come back with more information</p> <p>The Public Consultation for NAP is just before Christmas, will more time will be allowed? Response: Yes, this will be an online consultation due to schedule delays Is the NAP a published document we can see for transparency reasons? Do you have any information on % compliance from last year, the most up to date information I have is 40% compliance? Response: EPA are responsible for LA Agricultural Inspection programme and there is a general report on this. Updated information is not published yet, but non-compliance is still 35-40%. However, it is more targeted towards risk now. Conditionality Inspections and Nitrogen inspections are reported to the European Commission. (Comment: from a Transparency POV this needs to be published) - Standardisation of reporting across LAs needs to happen before we can report things properly, so everyone is reporting on the same thing and the information is confirmed.</p> <p>Comment: There is concern about the NAP and Nitrates figures being published late and what will happen after 2025. Also concern that Nitrates derogation advice is not happening.</p> <p>What criteria changed red map to purple map – why were issues not corrected in purple map? On the recent EPA map, the area taken out was 2/3 of the country Hydromorphological testing done on local river, river is doing well, so why is this area included, what criteria is being use? Response: Criteria change where there is also a water quality impact in catchment, so some areas could come out. Surveillance monitoring network was the only network that could be used (for N Directive). If there is a downstream issue in catchment the whole catchment will be effected.</p> <p>Extensive use of anaerobic digestion (AD) in Europe, this will not be one on every farm, manure will be moved to different place. N is more bio-available, so what is going to happen? Response: State has ambitious plans for AD, N will be processed into a dried form and spread in arable land to replace chemical fertiliser, this will have an environmental benefit. Comment: AD is not going to be our solution for next few years, don't have confidence that this is deliverable based on Teagasc figures. Very few people are willing to sign paperwork.</p>	

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		<p>Comment: To get into derogation you have to prove you have slurry storage – derogation farms are included in national figures. Request that information of these numbers are highlighted for transparency.</p> <p>Comment: there is a concern over the use of commonage for slurry spreading.</p> <p>Why are estuaries only tested in December and why is dilution not accounted for? Areas like the Slieve Blooms/Blackstairs are now taken out because of issues in the estuary. There needs to be joined up thinking in terms of measures.</p> <p>Response: Estuaries monitored all year round, ecology is most sensitive in the winter, so the Department want us to report during this time. In terms of dilution, we take account of this during loading assessments and shows increased N when flow is considered.</p> <p>Ecological status for heavily modified river bodies (should be reclassified as good ecological potential) – it isn't a race to the bottom. With the ones put forward now, they are there because of drainage purposes, but ecological and water quality status still has to be reached.</p> <p>Water Quality Monitoring at Agricultural Catchments Programme (ACP) - Eddie Burgess, Teagasc.</p> <p>Measures to mitigate the impact of nitrate in water arising from farming - Donal Daly</p> <p>Please see summary notes of these presentations in separate document.</p> <p>Q & A - ACP Catchments Programme & Measures to mitigate the impact of nitrate in water</p> <p>Figures are historical, last year there was a reduction in N purchases what will the effect of this be?</p> <p>Response: if load is reduced there will be less loss of N from soil into rivers/estuaries. If it reduces surplus N, we will get a reduction.</p> <p>What is the effects of tillage under CAP?</p> <p>Response: With tillage there is no root maps in winter to catch N – catch crops can help but will they make more N available in spring.</p> <p>Castledockerall: Rainfall 25% higher in than Timoleague. Timoleague has denitrification from deep ground water.</p> <p>Comment: ACP should be commended and this needs to be funded.</p> <p>Misconnections between rest of science and ACP results, it is only 6 catchments, but does not reflect the broader science around the world?</p> <p>Response: All findings have been published in peer reviewed papers. Stocking is a farm based stocking rate where as N loss happens in hot spots. Reducing stocking may lead to drainage of areas where no grazing is currently taking place. The biggest way of increasing NUE is introducing clover. There is no silver bullet for N loss and NUE. N in soil water cannot be compared to N in estuaries. Connectivity between N hotshots and the River is an issue (2.6 is a coastal standard based on sliding scale. This doesn't relate to rivers but this is WFD)</p> <p>How do we deal with urine patches?</p>	

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		<p>Is there research in teaching cows to pee in one spot? Response: Take cows in when there is a fear of recharge, reduce crude protein</p> <p>Teagasc modelling shows N reduction will reduce impact, this is contradictory and not helpful. Response: Don't believe we are saying different things, modelling is on field bases but not on a whole farm basis. Modelling showed impact of banding and reduction to 220.</p> <p>Given ACP was to evaluate effectiveness of NAP can you provide this data for us? Response: We do have this data and we can send you the scientific papers. Comment: They should be put into reports from a Policy point of view. How do the ACP catchments compare to WFD standards</p> <p>What is your view on blanket spreading of Fertiliser? Response: Depends on what rate and when, if we want to reduce N we need to focus on reducing surplus N. If done at right time it's ok, if it's done too late there is a big issue. Teagasc report allude to big financial impact.</p> <p>There is no focus on chemical nitrogen, if you look at work with grass swards, rather than focusing on organic N or denitrification. Chemical N is water soluble and very dangerous. Can we not just focus on removing this? Response: Total N is the issue (including N produced by clover), and how much is prone to leaching.</p> <p>Comment: Should N graphs be shown on a 10-year sliding scale.</p> <p>Comment: Can we look at revisiting this at a later date. What isn't conflicting is that N is increasing in untreated drinking water quality and this is becoming an issue. Targeted measures are required and there is yet to be an agreement on what the right measures for N are from a public health perspective.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the speakers & Ted Massey from DAFM who all left the meeting at this point.</p> <p>Next Steps The Chair explained that today is the first step on this important topic. This is a policy coherence issue. The Forum can do a thoughtful piece of policy advice on this. We will have the upcoming consultation on the NAP. The Public Consultation sounds like it will be rushed but we need a longer-term plan. However, we need to be strong on the Public Consultation. Forum has very diverse views, so a workshop on this would be useful. Agree with Barry Deane re informed questions. Public Consultation must be based on the 3 Pillars (social, economic, environment) Do we have input on the economic side? Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contentiousness of AD • Drainage of ploughed pasture. <p>Some members of the view that we need solutions that don't decimate income at farm level. Overall loads include stocking rate and chemical N (e.g</p>	

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		remove stock and income is gone, remove chemical N farmers will look for an alternative source) Grass will be there with no cows to eat it. If there is a way to protect environment and economics that is the way forward.	
5.0	AOB	None	
6.0	Next meeting	Tuesday 5 th December 2023 at 10.30am in the Ashling Hotel, Dublin	