



Plenary Committee Meeting No. 28

Meeting held on the 20th October 2020 at 10.00 am via ZOOM

Minutes AGREED

Attendees: Tom Collins (Chair), Denis Drennan, Paul O’Brien, Derrie Dillon, Dominic Cronin, Martin McEnroe, Neil Walker, Laurie Kearon, David Wright, Gerald Quain, Izzy Petrie, Suzanne Linnane, Bernadette Connolly, Ollan Herr, , Charles Stanley-Smith, Brendan Fitzsimons, Siobhan Ward, Connie Rochford, Barry Deane, Jean Rosney, Tim Butter & Liam Berney.

Apologies: Sinead O’Brien, Elain McGoff, Keith Hyland & Tim Fenn

In attendance: Gretta McCarron, Alec Rolston, Angelos Alamanos and Donal Purcell

Item	Details	Summary	Action
1.1	Welcome	The Chair welcomed the members & staff to the meeting and in particular Angelos Alamanos as the new Post Doctorate Policy Analyst in association with DkIT.	
1.2	Minutes	Minutes of the Plenary meeting held on the 14 th September were agreed	Noted
1.3	Matters arising	None- items included in the agenda	
2	Corporate Issues	<p>2.1 To receive Update on the Forum’s expenditure for 2020 The A/SEO updated the members regarding the Forums expenditure to the 30th of September</p> <p>2.2 To receive update on the Forum’s proposed budget for 2021 The A/SEO gave an overview of the budget to be submitted to the Department for 2021 with a proposed total expenditure of €688,000 for the year with the detail on the actions to be covered under Research, Education & Communications</p>	
3.	Research Actions	<p>3.1 To receive update on research projects incl. Early Career Bursaries, Peatlands & Invasive Species Research</p> <p>The Research lead updated the meeting on the projects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early career Bursaries: 9 potential topics for early career bursaries. Three projects have been awarded and waiting on detail on the fourth, topics include: Water resources and conservation, Drinking water protection, Legacy contamination in lakes and rivers nutrients and microbial pollution in sediments and Behavioural change. Query from Members if there were any further plans to readvertise a project for P and N recycling research projects? The Research Lead explained that we can review again the areas for inclusion in 2021. • Peatlands: Received 2 submissions and awarded to Dr Renou Wilson from UCD, team of experts in peatland management, kick off 	

		<p>meeting has been held. Awarded on 25th September, draft deliverables this calendar year and final deliverables by end January. Unsuccessful peatlands tender identified a body of work to collate peatland conditions as spatial data sets. Approached tender team to do a body of work on this as it would be a good resource to be made available via our website. Discussions with the Dept on budget.</p> <p>Invasive Species Management: Discussion with Martin McEnroe and stakeholders on Invasive Species tender, submission date in early November.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charles Larkin report on the CAP and impacts on water quality: The report has been submitted and the working group had a meeting yesterday. Charles to present on this work today. 	
		<p>3.2 To receive presentation on the Forums CAP Research Report by Dr Charles Larkin.</p> <p>The Chair outlined the background to the Research work on the CAP undertaken by Charles Larkin on behalf of the Water Forum. He explained that the report was a report to the Forum rather than of the Forum and that the impetus of the report is to trigger debate. The report which had been presented to the CAP Research Working Group was accepted for presentation as a Report to the Forum. The report has been delivered with a policy brief, summation of findings plus recommendations. The Chair acknowledged the work of Charles Larkin & the CAP Research Working Group.</p> <p>Charles Larkin presented the background & findings of his research report <i>titled "Optimising water quality returns from the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)." </i></p> <p>His findings outlined how the CAP impacts on water quality and the discussions and actions needed to ensure sustainable farming that does not deplete natural capital and ensures public money buy's public goods. He explained that data gaps in a number of the areas were a significant issue in carrying out the research including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water abstraction data is lacking. • No academic literature on poultry in Ireland, one new paper. • Dominant analysis by Teagasc, research agenda set by Teagasc. • Forestry is analysed because agri-env. schemes deliver forestry <p>Issues identified in the research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU financing, Ireland is a net contributor, funds that come into Ireland for agriculture, actually come from Ireland. • The use of this money for environmental good was consistently supported by all sector interviews. • Irish tend to believe money should be paid to farmers to maintain the land and ensure sustainability of rural communities, so the EU Green deal strategies are not far from Irish people's considerations. • Capacity to pay for Pillar 2 is diminishing. Budget only looking 2 years ahead. Agri env schemes in pillar 2 is not being considered as fiscal space is not known. Limited policy envelope. • Irish policy system is sensitive- high proportion of households with no income. Irish economy has to support those households, they are sensitive to cost of living. Income tax remained the same despite the largest decrease in employment. Large numbers of people make little market income or none at all. Sensitive to accommodation costs, money spent on food in the past is now spent on accommodation. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic importance of farming is only 1% of GDP but has strong externality effects. • Natural capital current approach means Ireland is not maintaining constant level of natural capital. Public goods are essential and these need to be protected. <p>Macro recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAP pillar 1 which drives the bus needs to value biodiversity and climate • Food systems need to be reformed, supply chains and food policies. <p>MESO recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upskilling of farm advisors, • rural broadband, • long term investment in agri-env schemes tailored to catchment needs. • Alternative markets, diverse forests, supply chains, • Asset approach to land management (do not waste asset) <p>MICRO recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm advisor support, • Expand current results-based projects, • Better compliance, more standards, • Research and technology, • Better feed policies to reduce pollution. <p>The Chair made reference to the research as very important to the work of the Forum & as a good means of generating debate on the issues.</p>	
	<p>3.3 key points from the Discussion on the CAP Research report</p> <p>The members acknowledged the work of Charles Larkin & the Working Group & had a wide ranging discussion on the various aspects of the report including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • downstream part of the economy that is dependent on agriculture, meat processors, prepared foods, etc. 80,000 beef farmers, middle age, societal resistance to great change and strong lobby of farming. • Downstream value-added processes. An analysis of those value chains needs original research but there are no details of this analysis for Ireland. With processed meat and prepared foods, farmers get very little for their produce. Most of the value is obtained by processers and supermarkets. • Irish food products have a high level of environmental controls, animal welfare conditions, if Ireland does not produce the food it will be purchased from countries with lesser standards. • We are the 2nd most food secure country in the world, we grow grass well & provide a product based on grazing. • Forestation, lots of studies by Teagasc, Farmers do not like to give over land for such a long period of time. Not maintaining it for future generations. A lot of production is in low-end pulp market, so low market value. Identified as an ongoing problem, need to address cultural issues. • CAP in existence since 1962. Farmers have signed up to this, funded to drain wetlands, remove scrub, produce sustainable food, now farmers are being told to change. While this is happening, produce is the same price it was in the 80s. Need to be sensitive to where farmers have been pushed for the last 60 years. Farmers need to be funded to make the new changes. 	

- Gov plan is not to cover country with trees bring it from 11% to 17%. Easy enough solutions to liquidity problems. In response to earlier points, we were doing a range of activities 60 years ago that we are not doing today. Conditions in which the CAP was created are different to now, climate change particularly. If we accept the climate crises we have to act now.
 - Push for public money for public goods and push for farmers to be paid for environmental goods. Lakes and wetland should not be filled, hedgerows should not be cut down. In EU at the minute, big agri-companies in EU are trying to amend CAP for the small farmers. Maintain big money for the big farmers and agri. companies.
 - Lots of focus on production, CAP decoupled from production, now rural development schemes towards a reduction in production, no longer linked to numbers of animals. Ireland has 7% cover of hedgerow but get very little recognition of that. Natural capital is interesting, how do we compare internationally? Human capital is most important, farmers are the managers of the natural habitat.
 - Emphasise the farming pillar signed up for something in 1962 wish to continue signing up for same thing. Reality is that Bord na Mona peat production is stopped, will never start again, jobs lost because of the impact of peat production. Workers involved have a just transition to a different job, a more sustainable job. We should apply a just transition for farmers also.
 - Just transition wasn't part of the brief of the study, could be part of the implementation analysis. 2 reports over the summer on this topic by Sinead Mercier.
 - Society needs to support farmers to make the changes that are required to address these issues.
 - Question of how the Forum plan to use the text of this report? How do we meet the challenge of a report we can all sign up to or does it stand alone? Would like to include the just transition approach.
 - The Chair explained that it is a report to the Forum rather than a Report of the Forum and that agreement didn't have to be got on the content as it is independent research commissioned by the Forum.
 - %value of farming in GNI proportion of carbon that Ag is responsible for? Ag responsible for 33% carbon of 6% employment, 0.92% GDP, 2% GNI star, 1/3 carbon output, carbon output during Covid did not move, transportation sector is small in comparison to electricity generation and agriculture. Low price of oil has impacted on carbon trading systems.
 - Agriculture is now a less significant part of Irish economy, tourism is more important for economic value. Key question for Ireland is how come a less significant part of the Irish economy is such a major player in carbon production and water deterioration?
 - Idea of asking a food sector colleague to a future meeting to get their perspective. Significant number of livelihoods depend on an indigenous food sector.
 - If we are to have a discussion on food industry we need to look at the quality of employment in that sector. Low paid jobs, many are exploitative in nature.
- The Chair asked Charles Larkin if he had underestimated the value of the Business of agriculture to the economy, upstream and downstream industry?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charles Larkin explained that the estimations are those used in the CSO figures. Direct and indirect employment effects, significant where economic activity is marginal. From an economical point of view from the country financial input is small, but outside the M50 agriculture is important. The economic recovery of Ireland is predicated on export industry around Dublin. No talk about equality of employment, sequestration figures are gross figures, report based on existing data, more up to date analysis in the agriculture sector that needs to be commissioned as the information is not out there. Limitation of the process is that the information is based on what data is available. • The Chair suggested that the Research Lead should meet with the working group again, review the feedback & integrate some of the observations & for the working group to agree a statement on the report that would be useful to have. Has the forum a position on how CAP would impact on water? • Members were asked to read the report, anyone who wishes to input to the working group. Communicate feedback and report back & to work towards a Forum position on the report. 	
		<p>3.4 To discuss proposals for Research projects for 2021</p> <p>The Research lead gave an overview of the research activities & budget planned for 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members asked if a focus could be included on Phosphorous. • Some members expressed an interest in the area of SDGs and how they could underpin our strategy going forward. • Analysis of wastewater for Covid connections. Members asked if the Forum can contribute to this in any way? The Research Lead explained that IW and UCD are collaborating on this area. 	
4.	Education Actions	<p>4.1 To receive update on the Forums Communication & Education Actions</p> <p>The Education lead provided an update on the proposed budget and activities for 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Newsletter template is prepared for approval • Magic of Water videos at editing stage. Will be launched during Science week. • Water matters at home video ongoing, article prepared for Journals to go with this. • Article in Farmers Journal this week to include introduction to FILLM, And an article on Rural Water News on FILLM and article in preparation for catchments.ie on FILLM. • Education and Awareness WG includes: Connie, Suzanne, Issy, Derrie and an Env. Representative has not yet been nominated. • Planning a meeting of non-formal educators in the coming weeks to report back results of survey. <p>4.2 To receive update on the Forums proposed Symposium/webinar.</p> <p>The Education Lead & Chair updated the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taken the view to organise a webinar or series of webinars, to include Charles Larkins paper to include responses from John Fitzgerald and Alan Matthews as part of the debate on the CAP. • Members agreed to proceed with a webinar on the CAP research report using the webinar as part of the debate & discussion to inform the Forums thinking. 	

5.	Update from the WS Standing Committee	<p>The Chair of the WSSC updated the meeting on the WSSC and IW liaison meetings. Outline position paper developed by the Post Doc Policy Analyst on the closure of beaches & bathing area during 2020. Members mentioned that the Coastwatch survey shows very high levels of nitrate. Beaches.ie not broad enough to show what is going on.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted that two issues arising in Water Services over the past two years in particular are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Urban wastewater and problems with getting this addressed, moral hazard accounts for 25% river pollution. 2. Vulnerability of Dublin's water supply: cannot understand apparent lack of urgency. Submission to CRU nearly 2 years ago. The Chair of the WSSC explained that the Government asked the CRU to review the project. The CRU cannot continue that process until the NWRP is complete & once that is complete then they will evaluate the EMWSP. The Chair suggested writing to the CRU for an update on this. If Gov have asked CRU as part of the process to see if it would go ahead the Forum needs to find out if they intend to complete the piece of work, if there is a blockage and if AFU do something about this? Need to establish if the study is completed, what the time scale is and what the process is. 	
6.	Update from the CM Standing Committee	<p>6.1 To receive update from the CM Standing Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CMSC has agreed to meet again with the Dept on the draft RBMP • Will continue to meet them over the next couple of months. • CMSC to discuss issues and then have a series of meetings with Dept • Dept indicated a strong desire to keep in touch with the Forum during the development of the plan, an iterative & consultative process. 	
7.	AOB	None	
8.	To Confirm the date & time of the Next Plenary meeting	1 st December at 10.00am	