

## Plenary Committee Meeting No. 30

Meeting held on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 via ZOOM

### Minutes AGREED

- Attendees:** Tom Collins (Chair), Sinead O’Brien, Elaine McGoff, Denis Drennan, Paul O’Brien, Dominic Cronin, Martin McEnroe, Neil Walker, David Wright, Gerald Quain, Suzanne Linnane, Bernadette Connolly, Ollan Herr, Sinead O’Brien, Charles Stanley-Smith, Elaine McGoff, Brendan Fitzsimons, Connie Rochford, Barry Deane, Jean Rosney, Siobhan Ward, Tim Fenn & Liam Berney.
- Apologies:** Izzy Petrie, Derrie Dillon, Keith Hyland, Laurie Kearon & Tim Butter.
- In attendance:** Gretta McCarron, Alec Rolston, Angelos Alamanos and Donal Purcell
- DHLGH:** Feargal O’Coighligh, David Flynn, Colin Byrne, Emer Connolly, Jennifer Peyton & Veronica O’Brien

Item	Details	Summary
1.1	<b>Welcome</b>	The Chair welcomed the members & staff to the meeting
1.2	<b>Minutes</b>	Minutes of the Plenary meeting held on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> November were agreed
1.3	<b>Matters arising</b>	none
2	<b>Corporate Issues</b>	<p><b>2.1 To receive update on staffing issues</b></p> <p><b>Resignation of Research Lead- Alec Rolston:</b> The Chair explained that Alec Rolston had resigned his position to take up a position in Adelaide. The Chair &amp; the members thanked Alec for his work &amp; the contribution he had made to the work of the Forum and wished him well in his move to Australia. Alec Rolston thanked the Members &amp; staff for their support and good wishes.</p> <p><b>Appointment of new Research Lead:</b> The Chair explained that as the Research Lead post became vacant that there was a panel of qualified candidates for the post organised by Tipperary County Council &amp; the position had now been offered to the next eligible person, Triona McGrath who has accepted the post &amp; is due to start on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February. The Chair was of the view that it would be useful for the Forum to prepare a paper on the staffing situation this year.</p> <p><b>2.2 To receive update on the Forum’s expenditure for 2020 (copy attached)</b> The A/SEO updated the members regarding the Forums expenditure to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 with total expenditure of €546,000 out of a budget of €618,000.</p>

3.	<b>Research Actions</b>	<p><b>3.3 To receive update on research projects incl.</b></p> <p>The research Lead updated the meeting on the status of the Research Projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Peatlands research is nearing completion with the draft final report submitted. 31<sup>st</sup> Jan for final deliverables to include a final report, synthesis report, policy brief and infographic which will be important for informing RBMP.</li> <li>• ESR Bursaries-4 projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improving comms on water availability in droughts, completion - March 1st.</li> <li>○ Source protection of private dw supplies, completion - 31<sup>st</sup> January.</li> <li>○ Sediment contamination in rivers and lakes implications for catchment mgt;</li> <li>○ Behavioural and process change for delivering ICM at agencies and orgs and governance changes are needed,</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Invasive species research is ongoing, due to submit draft on 31<sup>st</sup> March.</li> <li>• Two background papers on water stewardship and leakage prepared for the WSSC.</li> <li>• Sarah Cottrell UCD examining resilience of DW Schemes in Ireland, focusing on multiple &amp; prolonged threats, Covid &amp; drought. Delaying this project for a few months.</li> </ul>
4.	<b>Education Actions</b>	<p><b>4.1 To receive update on the Forums Communication &amp; Education Actions</b></p> <p>The Education &amp; Comms Lead updated the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Water matters at Home video is on you tube and we are collaborating with Development Perspectives on the SDG6 Clean Water and Sanitation Challenge- watch video, carry out actions and post on social media #watermatters.</li> <li>• News articles on the website every week.</li> <li>• Winter newsletter is drafted and seeking information on events and activities from members for the issue. Members requested to forward any news items this week.</li> <li>• Non-formal educators meeting was held in December. Doing a showcase of education provision in Catchments.ie. It will be available on the Forums website also.</li> <li>• Magic of Water videos have been shared with RTE Learning hub who have said they will use them as part of there after school's programme.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2 To discuss the Forums webinar on CAP which took place on 4/12/20</b></p> <p>The Education &amp; Comms Lead updated the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webinar on the CAP report took place on 4<sup>th</sup> December. It had 288 registrations with 180 attendees.</li> <li>• Good mix of agencies, Dept. personnel, research, industry and agriculture present.</li> <li>• Positive feedback. Presentations are on YouTube with links to the Forum's website.</li> <li>• Comms plans are prepared for the Peatlands research, presentation to Plenary with a webinar to disseminate the results in April or May.</li> </ul>
5.	<b>CM Standing Committee</b>	<p><b>5.1 To note the Forums submission to the DHLGH regarding the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP)</b></p> <p>The Research Lead gave an overview of the consultation on the NAP. First consultation phase submission due on 15th February with phase 2 in mid-March. Phase 1 is a high-level response. Does not go into specifics, based on previous discussions.</p> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strong policy coherence at national and EU levels is needed but it is not outlined how this will be achieved in the consultation document.</li> <li>2. Public consultation and documents. Should include details for non-expert groups. Expertise is needed to respond so this limits equity and equality of access. Crux is lack of details and lack of scientific information so not enough information to make an informed submission. To help achieve this, the Forum recommends a research team be established in the dept. to address the deficit in scientific information</li> <li>3. Concerns on the review timetable, timelines are too short.</li> <li>4. Transparency of decision making. Needed to address power in-balances of stakeholders.</li> </ol> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members were of the view that consultation such as this without a support document is not consultation, as it means people are not informed, cannot respond without</li> </ul>

		<p>standard information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert presentations, followed by exploration of the issues based on this input, expert can be qualitative as well as quantitative. This is key to consultation process. Priority this year to emphasise with the Dept. the importance of facilitating deliberative democracy. The Forum needs to consider how to get the message across on this.</li> <li>• Legislative obligations need full compliance, clear and stronger linkages between NAP and RBMP, measures time bounded and appropriate, information vacuum in public consultation doc, resulting in inequity, links to public engagement briefing paper.</li> <li>• Concern re the short time frame of 8 weeks which is a statutory minimum, important to comment on this.</li> </ul> <p><b>5.2 To discuss the Forums submission on the Review of the National Development Plan- Review to Renew- Deadline 29<sup>th</sup> January,</b>  <b>key aspects:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Level of ambition regarding water resources</li> <li>2. Are suitable resources being allocated</li> </ol> <p>Response Included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input on public consultation, highlighting public participation paper,</li> <li>• Policy integration needed and FILLM recommendations</li> <li>• IW EMWSP planning cannot be progressed until Abstraction legislation is adopted.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Crux of submission, on investment in WS infrastructure, reduction in period 2014-2017 from 8% to 0.4% of gov. capital investment, urgent priority which needs additional resources. Proposed need for multi-annual funding model and this has proven beneficial in Rural water.</li> <li>➤ Significant investment needs in rural water services and IW also.</li> <li>➤ Nutrient recovery and circular economy recommended also. Some members queried if the forum should be asking IW to prioritise nutrient recovery in sensitive sites in the first instance as there was a robust debate a few years ago on this topic. It was pointed out that Rural Ireland is managing sludge spreading within safe parameters, need to be careful with language. It is understood that IW have trialled a Strovite system at the Ringsend plant, where magnesium is added which does not contain toxic metals, a cleaner way of gaining nutrient recovery which protects the interests of people who want to protect the food chain from toxic metals.</li> <li>➤ Dublin water supply project: Need to be firmer on why legislation will hold up the WSP. Importance of stating very strongly that this project is needed. Agreed position is Dublin is a position of extreme vulnerability and this needs to be addressed. An Fóram accept the need for environmental assessment and the planning process. There is also the requirement to adopt the legislation on abstractions.</li> <li>➤ To add the issue of planning, and how this process impacts on water. Such as one- off houses in rural areas. No national debate on its impact on water.</li> <li>➤ NDP different from National Planning Framework, would like a report on the impact of planning and water quality. The Chair was of the view that this area needs clarity and further assessment, and a report would be useful. Consider inviting the Planning Regulator- Niall Cussons, on the interaction between planning and water. There is going to be public consultation on planning guidance, opportunity for Forum to raise these issues.</li> </ul> <p><b>5.3 To discuss the Forums draft submission to the Climate Action Plan</b>  <b>Climate Action submission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission to the Department is to include the FILLM approach, that will allow the integration of policy and realisation of co-benefits for water, biodiversity and climate.</li> <li>• Template on actions include: Promoting FILLM with member organisations and wider agencies; Proposal to pilot FILLM in a number of catchments in 3rd RBMP,</li> <li>• Dissemination activities for Peatlands Research.</li> <li>• Education and awareness messages and collaborations with programmes such as Green Schools and our Water in the Home video to raise awareness and contribute to</li> </ul>
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		<p>positive action and environmental outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a query re. one of the charts/tables with a reference to forestry that was used in FILLM regarding Forestry. The Chair explained that while he was aware of this issue, but it was never the intention of the framework to replace all conifers. The intention was the reforestation of deforested land. It was agreed to include a footnote to explain this in the document</li> </ul>
6.	<p><b>Meeting with Feargal O' Coighligh Assistant Secretary DHLGH &amp; dept. Officials</b></p>	<p>The Chair welcomed the Assistant Secretary, Feargal O' Coighligh DHLGH &amp; his team to the meeting. He gave an overview of current priorities in the area of Water &amp; Water Services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2021 as an important year: Development of the 3rd RBMP with the draft to be published soon, significant conversation around better integration, set out key strategic issues for water with the cross Gov committee.</li> <li>• Review of the NDP crucial for investment of IW and RWS, challenges in infrastructure, continued evolution of IW is key.</li> <li>• IW should be a separate entity approval to draft legislation to do this will be published later this year. Policy paper to Gov in coming weeks to be published in Feb.</li> <li>• Rural Water Investment programmes, private wells and septic tanks, WWS in rural villages, PWS are most at risk according to the EPA, delivery of rural water services is a strategic issue we need clarity on this year.</li> <li>• EU commission - 5 cases against Ireland on legislative compliance, need to review legislative codes, abstractions bill outstanding, revised DW Directive as well.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion with Forum Members</b>-Issues raised by the chair &amp; members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forum doing work against background of continued deterioration of Irelands waters. Shared view in Forum, that the science is right, and the problem is getting worse.</li> <li>• High level of concern around Dublin water services, delays/timescales in advancing the EMWSP is concern, all water from Liffey, limited headroom, low resilience &amp; leakage.</li> <li>• WWTP also an issue. More general concern regarding IW, and Gov inaction and lack of urgency around water treatment, particularly with raw sewage.</li> <li>• FILLM integrated approach to climate, biodiversity and water. Overall governance of environment debate in Ireland is of significant concern and ambition for the Forum.</li> <li>• General view around the issue of consultation, concern re 4 consultation papers in front of the Forum today, we have a view on how consultation should happen. Period of consultation generally too short, inadequate spacing of consultations between Gov Depts, inadequate information being supplied with consultation documents e.g of the IW Resources Plan which is a 25-year plan but allowed 10 weeks over the Christmas period. There is a need to adopt a proper model, example given of the Citizens Assembly, need a model like the OECD model seems the best.</li> <li>• Consultation means engagement, dialogue, transparency, questions arise re what influence does your input have on the final outcome. Need a model, adopted and proper definition on this.</li> <li>• Last agenda item - status of Forum into the future, transition of Forum to next cycle, at level of membership and executive.</li> </ul> <p><b>Chair outlined a number of questions arising for the Forum Members:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the level of influence on a process or output and then the need for transparency on why the process/output was not influenced?</li> <li>• Forum good example of getting it right, but what role does it have &amp; is notice being taken?</li> <li>• Members are now assessing their investment to the Forum. What influence and how effective is the Forum being?</li> <li>• How open are Depts to its input? Need a dialogue with DHLGH &amp; other Depts on this.</li> </ul> <p><b>Dept responses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regarding the EPA reports on env pollution- the Dept have similar concerns on these reports.</li> <li>• A correlation between national herd and nitrates in water courses. Dept of Agriculture are aware of this &amp; it is linked to the climate change agenda, the agriculture climate</li> </ul>

document recognises this link. This is key to national food policy and CAP.

- Regarding investment in IW: It had a difficult initial phase with water charges, shared concerns where delivery is not as fast as expected. Gov. view NDP to provide funding for investment. Review will look at this.
- EMWSP is complex & has been delayed, conflicts between National, environmental policy, economic objectives and local issues, in a difficult space to tease out. Question asked by public re if this project is needed or should IW just fix pipes. NWRP will try to build national understanding on this. Bring leakage down to international standards, only when we do this can we authorise significant future investment.
- FILLM: See the need to integrate biodiversity, climate and water and this will be reflected in RBMP. Biodiversity is in the Housing Dept now, more can be done in this space, review of LAWPRO needs to see synergies at local level.
- Challenge we are operating under different legal obligations, Directives at EU level, WFD 6-year cycle, Habitats and Birds had different processes, integration can be stymied by these legal constructs, Gov Depts. similarly, challenges here but communication helps.
- Dept found the AFU public participation paper very interesting, more can be done on how submissions are used and how feedback is given. There is a challenge to get time to do this while also delivering on work programmes.
- On RBMP- in process of finalising that aspect of the report, feedback on consultation and how this is being fed into draft actions. Similar report will be available at the publication of the draft Plan. There is a 6-month consultation period on the final plan. Constant evolution of our work, happy to take input on board. Recommendations around social science expertise into the future.
- Nitrates action programme under consideration at the moment, early consultation and then a 2nd consultation that takes in the expert input and will consult on the draft Plan then. Will include background reports and other information.
- RE. N & P. Phosphate recovery most efficient way would be to do it at scale, Ringsend plans are significant, to bring that to local individual level would be difficult. Dept is working with Leitrim County Council to see if there is more we can do in this area. Looking at Zero discharge systems, possibly different from the zero WA proposal, approaching Cavan, Roscommon and Monaghan, looking at innovative systems in line with EPA code of practice to allow for research approaches.
- Next research call will look at these systems, Leitrim Council is working on this. Forum research proposals might link to this programme.
- Organisational methods - never improve on something you can do without; one off housing is a difficulty in relation to waste handling. Better to develop villages and towns.
- Review of UWWTD, every treatment needs basic level, this is under review, 3 areas of focus:
  - pollutants of emerging concern and micro-pollutants,
  - urban areas of less than 2000 people - standards,
  - storm water flows will be reviewed.

#### **Members responses**

- Members explained that the Forums priority must be the RBMP & its obligation is good waters by 2027. The RBMP must address why water quality is deteriorating, tangible solutions to agriculture and wastewater issues.
- A key question around future policy coherence, concern re the Agri food strategy, hydromorphology issues also - OPW have 80 flood mgt policies, majority without WFD objectives built into them.
- RBMP cannot be more of the same, lack of resources for the DHLGH & question re what can be done to get more resources for your team.
- Encouraged by what the Dept is doing regarding the DW Directive in a collaborative way. Opportunity to build on this with FILLM to realise other co benefits, get a process

		<p>and structure that works well. Importance of this is key. A point we have come to here is co-benefits, positive intervention in one area helps another area.</p> <p><b>Dept responses.</b>  Source protection is a challenge, land rights are issues.  Response to members question re investment in wastewater treatment, when is this decision being made &amp; who makes this decision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources are available to IW, almost a billion euro per annum in infrastructure.</li> <li>• Constraints on Gov funds that are set out in National Development Plan.</li> <li>• IW 25 year investment plan, 5 year investment plans, need to operate within policy framework.</li> <li>• CRU signs off on the plans.</li> <li>• Dept. does not decide on individual projects, it sets the policy to reach the legislative requirements.</li> </ul> <p>Can consider Irish Water investment in 4 boxes,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IW remediation systems,</li> <li>2. maintaining performance,</li> <li>3. population change additional needs,</li> <li>4. climate change adaptations and innovation.</li> </ol> <p>RBMP Consultation later this year, draft slower than hoped, likely to be Q2 for consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-going Dept Ag discussions, still going through consultation submissions.</li> <li>• Plan is to hold full 6 month consultation, ambition for final plan by end 2021.</li> <li>• Gaps known, balancing the right level of ambition and what is socially and economically acceptable.</li> <li>• There could be an argument for publishing elements of the draft separately, what has been going wrong? Potentially issue the draft as a process!</li> </ul> <p><b>Idea of a consultation meeting with the Forums CMSC for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engagement with Forum members on the proposed programme of measure options including the characterisation measures and consultation inputs to hand from SWMI.</li> <li>• This may assist in facilitating the process of dialogue rather than only having input into a final document.</li> <li>• The Dept explained that Resources was an issue, hard to get RBMP that address all of the issues. Other work CAP, NPF,</li> </ul> <p><b>Membership Regulations</b>  Update for the members regarding the Forum membership regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledged the work of the members on the Forum in a voluntary capacity.</li> <li>• Put on notice formally recommending the appointments to the Minister.</li> <li>• Appointment letters will be sent by the end of the month with appointment for a period of 3 years.</li> </ul> <p>Dept acknowledged the work done by Alec Rolston &amp; wished him well in the future.  The Chair thanked Feargal &amp; the Team &amp; acknowledged the work of the staff in the Dept.</p>
7	WS Standing Committee	<p><b>7.1 Introduction &amp; discussion on the Forums draft submission in response to the public consultation on Irish Waters National Water Resources Plan (NWRP).</b>  NWRP, extended deadline to March 1st.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamental issues to do with data, definitions, headroom, how criteria in decision making is used, systems theory as an approach to deal with planning by IW which is more adaptive.</li> <li>• Good to recognise that as a longterm aspiration if you have an effective model of the whole system, can do multi criteria analysis, 530 WRZ are not connected, solutions is doing investments to connect these to improve resilience.</li> <li>• Looking at local solutions first, then what if we spent extra money connecting different zones within a region. With the lack of data this will be based on human judgement. Needs systems thinking to address issues. What is the best manual system they can</li> </ul>

		<p>use?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EMWSP goes beyond Dublin, beyond the complexity of systems in the short term.</li> <li>• This is the National Framework, the regional plans will be key to delivery.</li> </ul> <p>Members were of the view that the document needs a stronger narrative which can be generated over the coming weeks.</p> <p>Executive will circulate the draft &amp; presentation to the members who are to come back with input by end January for document to be finalised &amp; reviewed by the WSSC.</p> <p><b>7.2 To note the Forums draft submissions to the CRU consultation on <i>Irish waters Revenue Control 3 Financial Incentives (Non-Domestic Billing and Leakage) &amp; the Irish Waters First Fix.</i></b></p> <p>Noted. Drafts discussed by the WSSC &amp; to be circulated to the Members before submission on the 15<sup>th</sup> February.</p>
8.	AOB	<b>Institute of Ecology and Env mgt. a conference 20<sup>th</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> April</b> , deadline submission of articles by looking at nature-based solutions. FILLM might be suitable thing to include.
9.	<b>Date &amp; time of the Next Plenary meeting</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> February at 10.00am