

PLENARY Meeting No. 37

Tuesday 19th October - VIA ZOOM
Agreed Minutes

Attendees:	Connie Rochford (Chair), Denis Drennan, Derrie Dillon, 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, Laurie Kearon, Barry Deane, Tim Butter, Siobhan Ward,
Apologies:	Paul O'Brien, Jean Rosney, Issy Petrie, Keith Hyland, Tim Fenn & Liam Berney.
In attendance:	Donal Purcell, Gretta McCarron, Triona McGrath, Angelos Alamanos, & Donal Daly
DHLGH:	David Flynn, Donal Grant, Graham McGovern, Colin Byrne, Donal Cronin, Lisa Egan, Deirdre Dunworth,
EPA:	Jenny Deakin
LAWPRO:	Carol McCarthy

No.	Item	Details
1.1	Welcome	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
1.2	Consideration of draft minutes meeting no. 36 held on 140921	The minutes of the plenary meeting number 36 of the 14 th September were approved.
1.3	Matters arising from the minutes.	<p>Appointment of Chair of the Forum:</p> <p>The SEO explained that he had been in contact with DHLGH regarding the appointment of a new Chair. He explained that it had been decided that State Boards would not be managing the process as the role of the Forum was that of an advisory one & therefore was outside their remit. The appointment will now be managed by the DHLGH and will be advertised shortly.</p> <p>Members queried the use of the title National Water Forum & why the National was removed. The SEO explained that the current name is what is in the Water Services Act 2017 & that the idea of changing the name could be put on the agenda with the Department once a new chair is appointed.</p>
2.1.	Corporate Update 3.1 To receive update on the Forum's expenditure.	The SEO explained that Forum expenditure to the 30 th September was €327,821.21
2.2	To consider & approve the Forums Draft Strategic Plan 2022-27	<p>The SEO provided an overview & update on the draft Strategic Plan which had been circulated. Members had a number of queries & suggestions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the Vision; suggested a change "<i>for community wellbeing and economic sustainability</i>". Agreed. 2. Page 11 Goal 2 to change to "<i>direct input in rural water policy, through engagement with the Dept</i>". Agreed

		<p>Members acknowledged the work of the Steering Group, Staff & the consultants Karen Brosnan & Geoff Dooley in facilitating the Strategic plan and that the final strategy was a good document.</p> <p>The Plan was adopted by the members on the proposal of Barry Deane & seconded by Charles Stanley-Smith.</p> <p>The SEO said that the Forum would need to look at a launch & publicity for the strategic plan once it is finalised & when a chair is appointed.</p>
3.1.	To receive update on the Communication & Education Actions	<p>The Comms & Education lead provided an update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release on the incidents at the Ballymore Eustace and Gorey water treatment plants was used by RTE News at 1 and the Chair was interviewed live on programme. Newstalk also picked it up and the Chair spoke on the topic in their evening news bulletin. • Press release on the NAP submission was reported on in the Irish Examiner. • Proposing a webinar on public participation and community engagement in water management with the Education WG for January 2022. Educ. Comms Lead to liaise with Comms person in SWAN who are also planning an event. • Science week is 7th to 14th November the theme is policy, science and community and working on a podcast/video on the development of the RBMP and how the policy for managing our rivers is based on scientific evidence and that communities have an opportunity to engage in water management in their local areas. • EcoEye filming is ongoing with a number of participants. Should be aired in February/March 2022.
4.1	Overview & discussion on the Draft 3 rd Cycle River Basin Management Plan.	<p>The Chair welcomed the reps from DHLGH, EPA & LAWPRO to the meeting. Colin Byrne provided an overview of the draft RBMP:</p> <p>Document structure includes: 3 appendices, 111 Proposed Measures, 120 Proposed Areas for Actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of status of Ireland's waters. Concern over losing pristine waters. • DHLGH will support the blue dot programme and the CAP Strategic Plan. Significant pressures: (Agriculture , Hydromorphology, Forestry, UUWW, DWW). • Risk has increased from agriculture (in line with dairy expansion) which must be addressed. • Hydromorphology risks have increased, while forestry and wastewater risks have declined. • Principles; increased ambition, integrated catchment planning (LAWPRO working on templates) and multiple benefits. • Programme of Measures; continued investment urban and rural water services, complete legal and institutional transformation, measures to protect water bodies. To set quantitative targets for the development of measures, updated characterisation/risk assessment outcomes, lessons from implementation measures, right measure right place. Multiple policy objectives. • Evolving governance and implementation. • Need for environmental enforcement (Review of LA functions will be important in this). Strengthen the links with the WFD and other regulatory process. Need to replace outdated and deficient regulatory regimes with more streamlined management regimes. • High levels goals; mandatory (e.g. water abstraction bill), increased compliance with existing regs.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of 2nd cycle measures (strengthening implementation structures, water and planning guidance for LAs, Blue Dots/EU Water of LIFE, Research programmes (IPA, ESRI), barriers to fish migration). <p>Key measures (section 5 RBMP).</p> <p>Agriculture; New NAP considerations (50% N losses to water, design & implementation of the new CAP green architecture & refocus on rewarding & delivery of environmental outcomes. Right measure right place with scientific evidence, measures with multiple benefits. E.g. 2500km (3% of network) interception measures can have major outcomes. DHLGH working with DAFM & EPA.</p> <p>Hydromorphology; new area, more understanding of the pressure of engineering works on rivers, lakes, etc. Establishing expert group to assist in scoping the new regime. Need for strengthening of controls on engineering works in or close to water.</p> <p>Urban areas; sustainable urban drain systems – scoping out a strategy for nature based SUDs. Close to finalisation – this will be followed by a strategy for LAs.</p> <p>Level of ambition; have not set targets for objectives – it will need to be done for final draft but not at this stage. Need to consider the scale of the measures and the technical capacity within the country. The practical steps, legislative process of delivery measures. Will also consider feedback from the RBMP process. Value the Forum in this process. The Financing strategy for implementation measures.</p> <p>Engagement; LAWPRO – 120 events, Newspaper adverts</p> <p>Discussion with members- main points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Plan is a statement of ambition and still not concrete targets. Need for strict delivery dates for implementation (lacking ambition without targets). Legal issues and delays should be addressed if it is considered a Crisis. Lack of planning guidelines. In terms of CAP – reduction of nitrates (lack of nitrates register must be addressed urgently), it will impact NAP and derogation. Re-wetting peatlands and CO2 emissions; drainage aspect is critical. Farmers need training as to why they should do all of these. Ethos within CAP must be strengthened for education (water, climate, biodiversity). Idea of what gets measured gets managed. <p>DHLGH Response;</p> <p><i>Have yet to define what to expect from water quality improvements.</i></p> <p><i>Planning – expect to go to consultation early 2020; which will give a clear framework for planners to work with.</i></p> <p><i>Nitrates Register – DAFM actively pursuing at the moment; they have information.</i></p> <p><i>CAP; Nitrates needs to be dealt with in regulatory issue (enforcement) rather than CAP.</i></p> <p><i>Hydromorphology; OPW have a long history of draining works; there has been a legislative gap which will be addressed by new strategy.</i></p> <p><i>ACIS; Important thing is how all the things from the CAP work together. ACIS vitally important. ASSAP is showing that engagement with farmers to get buy in.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members welcomed the 46 integrated catchment plans with public engagement. Ambition; 3232 water bodies, 40% failing, 50% at risk; how many of the water bodies that are failing will be fixed? Governance and implementation; lack of clarity on roles and oversight; e.g. role of WPAC. Who is in charge of implementing the plan?
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- Public participation – what is being done differently relative to the second cycle. How will views be taken on board, don't see programme for effective public ppt?

DHLGH Response

Catchment plans, good development during this cycle, interested in discussing template development possibly with LAWPRO, DHLGH & AFU, what could be in it and what is achievable etc.

Resources are limited which will influence the plans and what is achievable.

Measures – mandatory. Sits within an ecosystem of enforcement.

Public participation; difficult to measure.

Hydromorphology - example making changes to man-made weirs can have negative impacts on ecology.

- Members expressed an interest in the SUDs & a hope that it will feed into the plan.
- Question re. how the climate check for measures will work?
- Great correlation between climate change and water.
- Members expressed concern re the long delay in the Ardnacrusha project- concern if the downstream passage has been sorted out.
- Members welcomed the integrated catchment approach. Emphasis on community engagement, learnings from NFGWS and source protection pilot project.
- Importance of governance and public participation. Strengthened considerably; for effective implementation, with stronger governance.
- The Chair reiterated about Governance and that public participation needs to be strengthened considerably & that plans are of no use if not implemented effectively. The diagram on page 20 structure has an obvious weakness - problem in terms of governance.

DHLGH Response:

Governance: Will be working with the IPA, EPA programmes lots of suggestions and ideas on how things could be improved. Value in having a session on this.

Heavy Governance - participation model slows things down needs to be balanced with ambition of what needs to be done.

What does participation involve that is different from what we are proposing? AFU participation structure, pick apart what is needed for 46 catchment plans what this will look like into the future. Complexity of other governance structures like climate change.

Minister is responsible for the implementation of measures. Measures are mandatory, some require encouragement. Farm level voluntary measures but within an ecosystem of compliance.

Public ppt: difficult to measure numbers, does not cover the richness of engagement. Improves breadth and depth of knowledge and concerns. Processes are not finalised, this is a draft and up for discussion. Room for engagement on this. Top-down public engagement and seeking ideas for more bottom up, events & ways to get involvement.

Impact on climate SEA process will take in consideration climate, along with climate change adaption process.

Ardnacrusha Q – being delayed by team - resources to put the process in play.

Jenny Deacon EPA explained that re pathways & source load reductions & time frames. Evidence says that the biology will recover quickly (if all pressures are addressed simultaneously). Focused approach with targeted measures. Issue – how many of the at-risk water bodies; the areas for action are supplementary measures

	<p>(with LAWPRO); not all water bodies at risk are within PAAs; they should still get action through RBMP. Communication with LAWPRO, to identify what measures should be addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did EPA/DHLGH chose the 527 AFA for this cycle. Are they based on risk categorisation? <p><i>DHLGH Response: Full report on the LA waters website about the selection process, stakeholders NFGWS, EPA, Dept etc. criteria used similar to last time. Found priority areas were discreet, problems coming from outside priority areas, taking a sub-catchment approach this time. More not at-risk water bodies included this time as result. Areas not at risk will benefit from protect measures. A plus in current plan is the focus on protection of water quality.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban wastewater, request for direct link between pressures, at risk water bodies and programme of measures. Does not say what measures are being put in place for at risk water bodies. Would like update on this during consultation. • Permeability of nitrates in soils how does that impact? <p><i>DHLGH Response: can include that in detailed meeting with AFU on WWT. Managing the review of the NAP. Just finished consultation 600 submissions now finalising text. Will have action programme completed by end of year. Defined action programme document will outline legislative and non-legislative actions.</i></p> <p>David Flynn thanked the members for the engagement & explained that it is a collaborative effort taking on members ideas and concerns.</p>
<p>Research and Policy Actions</p>	<p>Policy Update</p> <p>The Research Lead gave a presentation on the draft submission in response to the Public Consultation on the Nat. Inspection Plan for DWW Treatment Systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members were of the view that the draft submission was comprehensive. • Members would like to see more inspections & a stronger emphasis on enforcement. Concern that there are too many advisory notices still open, some not closing because the soil type is not right. • Need to make recommendations around that such as increased grant programmes. • Recommendation that the EPA carry out more audits. • Recommendation 4, those located in a delineated drinking water catchment or a critical source area of a delineated catchment. • High status sites should be prioritised, • Members asked to forward comments to the research Lead by the end of the week & then the final draft will be sent for approval early next week. <p>Research Update</p> <p>To confirm the research report <i>Management of Invasive Alien Species</i> as a report to the Water Forum</p> <p>The Research Lead provided an overview of the report & its 10 recommendations. RBMP 2nd cycle actions on IAS not all completed. The Forum will have a lot of material for our submission to the RBMP for IAS; needs to be ministerial lead, Working group to lead on the dissemination of these report findings comprised of : Siobhan, Suzanne, Martin, Charles & Tim to develop actions and report to CMSC. The IAS report was accepted proposed by Martin & seconded by David Wright.</p> <p>Other Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Domestic Water Conservation report was received & will be reviewed by the team and presented to the WSSC. • Policy coherence research is ongoing update later in the week. • Early Career Bursary awarded to Mateo at UCD and it is started.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-Doc will do some research on nature-based solutions.
6.1	Update from the WSSC	<p>Update from Water Services Standing Committee meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEO highlighted the correspondence with Irish Water & EPA re. issues at Ballymore Eustace & Gorey WTPs. Chair explained that WSSC was in discussion with IW relating to ongoing issues at Ballymore Eustace and Gorey, concerns were raised with IW and the forum has the opportunity to go back to them on this. Members expressed concern re the EPA audit which showed a lack of oversight of quality control. Extremely concerned about this, problems with procedures, training, equipment. Possibility of something going catastrophically wrong cannot be overlooked. WSSC to meet with Michelle Minihan from the EPA. • Barry Deane, Chair of the WSSC explained that he had been chair for over 2 years & intended to step down due to other commitments but would be happy to stay on as a member of the Standing Committee. Members acknowledged the work that Barry had put in as Chair & thanked him for that.
7.1	AOB	As a follow up to the meeting with the DHLGH the members suggested that the meeting with the Department in November should be on Water, Food & Farming & then in December on Governance in the RBMP & then to follow up in January on Urban Wastewater & possibly Public Participation which is a significant area of concern for the Forum.
8.1	Date of Next Meeting	Originally scheduled for 7 th December but may have to be rescheduled as meeting with DGHLGH may be scheduled for that day.