



Plenary Meeting

Tuesday 24th January 2023

Aisling Hotel / Zoom

Agreed Minutes

Attendees: Matt Crowe (Chair), Connie Rochford, Bernadette Connolly, Keith Hyland, David Wright, Gerald Quain, Neil Walker, Suzanne Linnane, Liam Berney, Charles Stanley Smith, Ollan Herr, Martin McEnroe, Paul O’Brien, Dominic Cronin & Tim Butter

Attendees Online: Denis Drennan, Barry Deane, Jean Rosney, Tim Fenn, Brendan Fitzsimons, Issy Petrie, Derrie Dillon, Sinead O’Brien,

Apologies: Elaine McGoff & Siobhan Ward

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

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| 1.1 | 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 6 December were approved. The Chair explained that he intends to have a discussion at the next plenary on principles and values, how we work together, focusing on respect, legitimacy, trust, everyone’s view is important. Will circulate a draft paper before the next plenary for discussion. | Minutes to be placed on website Circulate paper on principles & values |
| 2.1 | Corporate Update | Membership SEO explained that he had met with the DHLGH & discussed the current membership vacancies in representation from fisheries, youth and 3 rd level, artisan food and beverage. Dept to consider and then we will follow up on this. Members appointed in Jan 2021 have a 3-year term to Jan 2024 when they would be eligible for appointment for another 3 year term. SEO will contact or meet with members individually over the next few months to discuss their plans & any consultations required with nominating bodies. | SEO to contact members |

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| | | <p>Expenditure The SEO reported that the total expenditure for 2022 was €589,592.</p> <p>Correspondence None</p> | |
| 3.1 | Work programme | <p>The Research Lead gave an overview of the priority areas for 2023/24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Conservation, • RBMP, • Public ppt, • Water& Climate, • Policy Coherence <p>Water Conservation Key statutory role – Forum has been assigned to advise on Water Conservation. Building up research, knowledge and policy positions for Dept. advice and advice to UÉ on water conservation</p> <p>Actions: Non-domestic water conservation research review, technical review external expertise, Ed and awareness workshop March, Joint Oireachtas Committee recommendations response, Develop position by April/May & provide advice to the Minister, Dept, UÉ etc.</p> <p>RBMP-Actions: Programme of Measures engagement, Review submission impact, Engagement plan for advice: Agriculture (Results based payments), Catchment management, Waters of Life, Hydromorphology (meeting with OPW once RBMP is in place)</p> <p>Public Participation-Actions: Research for practical advice, advice to Lawpro & DHLGH, community engagement and implementation of RBMP/WFD, research what has worked nationally/internationally. Add working group work programme to outputs. Lawpro to share Discussion Paper on the pilots for the CMP and the development of the CMP with follow up meeting with Public ppt Working Group and possibly CMSC depending on Discussion paper content.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair said he would like an update from Lawpro on their work programme (what are they seeing? What are the problems?) • Members mentioned that the Lawpro presentation to ppt working group showed great progress in their work. Movement towards outcomes. • RBMP and Catchment Management Plans (CMP) – view that they are spread across the public ppt and CMSC, need to have joint meetings for CMP. Members asked if the LAWPRO Discussion paper could be circulated to the members. Programme of Measures (POM) and engagement need to clarify that we advocate to get our recommendations addressed. • Concern that there is no report of the progress been made by Lawpro & therefore it can be challenging to know the position. The Research Lead explained that there is so much work being done on the ground by Lawpro, but this information needs to | Review Non-domestic research. Arrange awareness & education Workshop on WC |

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| | | <p>be public. It was mentioned that Lawpro info is published on catchments.ie in pdf format.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Action: To continue working with DHLGH to get as much of AFU recommendations included in the final RBMP as possible. • The Terms of reference for public ppt group; question if it's for Water Services as well as the RBMP? Need to consider this. The draft terms of reference for the group PPT to be agreed with plenary and it would be useful to include short- and medium-term goals for the work of the group. • Query re how does the Lawpro discussion paper deal with the POM & final Plan? will AFU input/feedback impact on the final plan? The Comms Lead explained that the discussion paper will define plans for the pilots and CMP, not sure of timing with the RBMP POMs. • CMP and Public ppt, marine env needs to be included and learnings from this as well. • Research Lead explained that the CMP discussion paper is relevant to the CMSC as well and Public ppt, all aspects not just RBMP, short term look to give advice on RBMP and learnings can be applied wider. • There is not going to be lots of detail on Public Participation in the RBMP. Advice should be in relation to Catchment Management Plans. • Important to get clarity from Lawpro on timelines from discussion paper and CMPs. • AFU role is to give advice on what is important, all activity should lead to advice. What advice, who to and what for. • Remind to look at advice in 3 areas let us know if we are missing something. • Member queried if Circular Economy for Nutrients should be a key area – can government assign this task to AFU. Chair explained that the Circular economy is not one of the key focus areas for the Forum. It is understood that there is a group on the circular economy under the Dept CCE working on this. • Need to look at planning in terms of sewage treatment plants – it is important planning is not held up for years. <p>Water Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dept, UÉ, CRU - Advice on water conservation. • In relation to customer service, quality of DW or comms. • Urban wastewater. • DW Quality/ Recast Directive. • Future proofing/climate change. <p>Actions in Water Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water conservation position paper. • UWW research, position paper. • Future proofing, research reports to be reviewed, shared, and presented, future advise, conference. • UÉ comms, customer service and interests of customers. • Rural water – Communicate with new PO of the Rural Water Section. Update on rural water review. Learnings from rural water sector. | <p>Circulate the LAWPRO discussion document on the CMPs & ppt.</p> <p>PPT WG Terms of reference to be circulated for the next plenary.</p> <p>Follow up with NFGWS re learnings on Water conservation in other sectors</p> |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum Chair to write letter of introduction to UE, our role and focus areas. <p>Water, Climate and Biodiversity Advice on sectoral plans, future proofing, cross dept. Research report, conference.</p> <p>Policy Coherence Idea to consider developing a position paper in 2024</p> <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water conservation- learnings from what worked in other sectors (rural water etc). NFGWS are happy to share their learnings. • Members of the view that the Water Services Section should include section on Drinking water investment programme. Provision of adequate capacity for DW and water supply a problem. We cannot ignore the Dublin situation in terms of capacity and infrastructure – catastrophe waiting to happen, need to address planning issues. Need for greater capacity and infrastructure in Dublin area. • Members questioned the area of Water and climate & importance of including biodiversity in this. • The research Lead acknowledged this & said that Capital investment can be included in WS and nature should be included in the Climate and Water advice (Policy Coherence) • Support the team on the work. Policy coherence, vague at the moment, if we could develop something concrete on this sooner than 2024 if possible. Need to look at coherence and conflict. • Chair asked if the Forum could do more ourselves on this, through the work that we are doing. We need to be clearer about telling people what we are doing. • Actions under Rural Water is broadly covered. Input from AFU essential to this process in the future. • WSSC could address comms between UÉ and LAs, new working group established RMOs includes all utilities. • Dublin water supply, key issue with Forum in the past. Not sure if anything has happened since. • The SEO explained that there had been progress towards this through the National Water Resources plan, EM Resources Plan & the new abstractions legislation. The Forum will seek an update on this. • Abstraction legislation is now in play, so we need to move this up the agenda. • Request to contact lawpro about sharing their project outcomes such as funded research, CS projects learnings and results. | <p><i>Contact lawpro for information</i></p> |
| 4.0 | Water Services | <p>Update on Submission to NW Regional Plan WSSC had inputted into the draft submission & their points were included in draft circulated to the plenary. The Research Lead provided an overview of the main points included in the letter to accompany the submission on the</p> | |

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| | | <p>Northwest RWRP including that National Policy should be implemented at regional scale.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bigger question about how we engage with UÉ: idea that the same input will give the same results. We need to change this. • Review abstraction legislation in relation to Group Water Schemes – discuss and update. • Need to revise cover letter and work on more constructive wording in relation to water conservation. • Water Services Standing Committee or Liaison group could follow up/do post-mortem on the regional plans and our submissions. • Need to change gear as Forum views are not reflected in UÉ plans. We are not getting a meaningful level of engagement. • The balance is right in the bullet points. Team to circulate the final letter for comment. • Noted that GWS are supplying good water schemes the NW region for the past 20 years, area not fully relying on UÉ for water. <p>Engagement with UE</p> <p>The Chair explained as referenced earlier that the Forum needs to engage directly with the board and CE of UÉ similar to that with the Minister and SG of the Dept. Proposing to write a letter to the board and copy to CEO to include reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capacity and infrastructure in the key focus areas, • water conservation, • interests of customers, • urban wastewater, • drinking water, • future proofing. <p>Propose to draft and circulate for input, for submission in Q1/Q2.</p> <p>Chair mentioned that the planning issue had arisen today, underinvestment in water services, increasing population etc.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Planning Framework, we should look at this in terms of water. • UÉ national plans not reflected at regional level, National Planning Framework translates very well into Regional Framework, could learnings be applied to UÉ. • Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) would likely be a better option as they address water services in these. • UÉ looking for a derogation under the new planning act to do with CPOs, can a team member look at it to see what it is about? • In relation to letter to UE, welcome idea of sending a letter to the UE Board, it should include our role, maybe a small flag that our input should not be swept away. | |
| 5.1 | RBMP | <p>Waters of LIFE</p> <p>The SEO gave an overview of the request from the Waters of LIFE project re the stakeholder Group of Sectoral reps for the WoL project & what is now proposed.</p> | |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with WoL to determine the representation required & Terms of reference for the group. • Outline AFU statutory advisory role on the development and implementation of the RBMP (as per Water Services Act) • To agree the organisation & format of meetings with WoL <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members to represent their own sectors & not the Forum • Benefit of having a staff team member to attend the meetings to share information etc. <p>SEO to follow up with Anne Goggin in WoL</p> <p>RBMP</p> <p>The Chair explained that he had spoken with David Flynn from Dept.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work ongoing and engaging with the EPA on gap analysis and what the actions are. • No date yet for the next WPAC meeting. • AFU will receive copy of draft POMS before WPAC meeting. • Chair and secretariat invited to WPAC, may choose to give further advice. • Idea of further engagement with CMSC for Dept update in 2 weeks. SEO to engage with DHLGH re a further meeting. | |
| | <p>Comms & education update</p> | <p>Communication Strategy</p> <p>Comms & Education Lead gave brief overview on comms strategy, Chair explained that it was an important piece of work.</p> <p>Education:</p> <p>Comms & Education Lead informed members that the AFU stand at the BTYSE was received very positively by the public, students, and teachers. Discussed teaching resources we have available to teachers.</p> <p>Comms Lead gave an overview of the winning water project and mentioned about a possible site visit to the see the project.</p> <p>AFU presence at BTYSE will encourage a focus on water in schools & to have more water projects in the future.</p> <p>There was a significant positive spike in AFU website traffic during and after the event.</p> <p>Members complemented the work done by the staff at the BTYSE & were of the view that it is a very worthwhile way to engage with the public, teachers & young people & to improve the profile of the Forum & that we should take part again if possible in 2024.</p> | |
| 6 | <p>AOB</p> | <p>Site visits/Fieldtrips: Currently arranging a site visit/fieldtrip to the Uisce Eireann - Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant for the WSSC</p> | <p>Arrange visit</p> |
| 7 | <p>Next meeting</p> | <p>Tuesday 14th March 2023</p> | <p>Arrange meeting</p> |