

Plenary Meeting

Tuesday 21st March 2023

Aisling Hotel / Zoom

Approved Minutes

Attendees: Matt Crowe (Chair), Connie Rochford, Keith Hyland, Gerald Quain, Ollan Herr, Martin McEnroe, Dominic Cronin & Tim Fenn

Attendees Online: Barry Deane, Jean Rosney, Derrie Dillon, Bernadette Connolly, Suzanne Linnane, Charles Stanley Smith, Paul O’Brien, Tim Butter

Apologies: Brendan Fitzsimons, Issy Petrie, Elaine McGoff, Sinead O’Brien, Denis Drennan, Siobhan Ward, Neil Walker, David Wright, Liam Berney

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

No.	Details	Summary	Action
1.1	Welcome & Apologies	The Chair welcomed members to the meeting & apologies were noted.	
1.1	Consideration of minutes of last meeting	<p>The minutes of the Plenary meeting held on the 23 January were approved.</p> <p>The Chair mentioned the following topics: The Land Use and Policy Review – The Chair explained that the EPA have just produced a report on the “Review” phase of the land use review & that it would be beneficial to ask the Authors to speak the members about the review, to get a water and nature update, an idea of future land use for planning ahead. Some members expressed concern about rewetting and farmers not getting compensation & that land is needed for food production. Economics of Water – climate change won’t be solved without solving water issues. Botany Society of Ireland and Great Britain Assessment of Nature in Ireland & Great Britain - study over many years, give nationwide perspective of habitats and species. Important for “Futures” based work – why land is the way it is now because of what happened in the past – what will it become in the future because of what we are doing now.</p>	<p>Minutes to be placed on website.</p> <p>Chair & Executive to arrange for speaker(s) on the land use review for a future meeting.</p>

No.	Details	Summary	Action
2.0	Corporate Issues	<p>Budget The SEO reported that an allocation of €698,599 was received from the DHLGH for 2023.</p> <p>Expenditure The SEO reported that the expenditure for January and February was €73,811.</p> <p>Correspondence Waters of Life – Request for AFU to nominate a representative for the WoL Stakeholder Advisory Group. It was agreed to nominate the Forums Research Lead Dr Triona McGrath to sit as rep. on the Stakeholder Group. The purpose of Water of Life was clarified as focusing on high status catchments.</p> <p>Annual Report 2022 The Comms & Education lead provided an overview of the 2022 AFU Annual Report. The members approved the contents of the draft 2022 report for submission to the DHLGH before the deadline of 30th April.</p>	Submit Annual Report
3.0	Update on RBMP	<p>3.1 Update on RBMP Process The Chair provided an overview of the engagements to date on the RBMP process including correspondence/ advice with further recommendations on on written commitments in the RBMP;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes based approach – text in POMs to focus on waterbodies. • Annual review and progress review by mid cycle to identify and implement gaps. • Agriculture Sectoral plan to focus on At Risk waterbodies. • Hydromorphology expert group to focus on interim measures. • Forestry – written commitment to addressing recommendations made in RBMP submission. • Urban wastewater – assessments to be complete by 2027. • Public Participation – commitment to pilot and evaluate different approaches. <p>While the DHLGH acknowledged receipt of the correspondence we await further engagement. It is expected that the Forum will receive a copy of the next version of the draft plan before the next WPAC meeting & that we can decide then if we want to give more advise before the final document.</p> <p>3.2 IAS Update Chair detailed meetings to date and outlined the following outcomes: The Forums research was welcomed by the NPWS & the NBDC and will be used in the development of the IAS Management Plan. A Steering Committee will assist the National Biodiversity Data Centre with the development of the plan and have requested an AFU Representative – It was agreed by the meeting that Martin McEnroe would be the nominee of the Forum on the steering group.</p> <p>Meeting agreed to write a letter of advice on IAS to the Minister O'Brien & Noonan to:</p>	<p>Review draft when received.</p> <p>Letter to issue to the Ministers in next few weeks, welcoming advancement and highlighting implementation challenges</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • welcome the engagements with the NPWS & NBDS on IAS & the inclusion of a Forum rep on the steering Group. • highlight the challenges in implementing the plan & the resourcing requirements for a single lead body and • the need to include design of processes for implementation in the plan. • Emphasise that IAS is an all-island issue and the need for North – South cooperation. <p>Martin McEnroe thanked everyone for their support and explained that the IAS Management Plan is to be finished by September and go to Public Consultation; the Forum can have input again at this point.</p> <p>3.3 Draft ToR for Public Participation Objectives of the ToR were discussed and it was confirmed that the requirements of the Aarhus Convention have been integrated in the ToR. The Members approved the ToR. Chair discussed having a meaningful approach to public participation to bring back to the wider group and that the purpose is to give policy advice on public participation. It was highlighted that the proposed Planning and Development Bill might have some problematic issues in terms of public participation. Engagement with Lawpro and the Community Fora is important as this is an example of “Learning by doing”.</p>	
4.0	Education & Communications actions	<p>4.1 Presentation & discussion on the draft AFU communications strategy & next steps</p> <p>The Education & Communications lead explained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the communication strategy overview is a revision of the 2019 strategy. • the communication objectives, key audiences, and key messages, which are based on the Forum’s policy positions. <p>Discussion on Key Messages Chair stated that the key messages are rooted in practice that has been happening over the past three years and shows a nice connectivity between water quality and water services.</p> <p>The forum needs to integrate the 3 Principle of Sustainability (Economic, Social and Environmental) into our Key Messages – Should we include Governance also and what would this mean in terms of research? Need to reference the SDGs – the Forum is responsible for SDG6.</p> <p>Listening to citizens and what they are saying needs to be strengthened – the national approach to public participation allows for this through giving the public a voice. The Forum can also do this via research (e.g., listening exercise and surveys). We need to be open to listening, but this must be evidence and fact based.</p>	Update Key messages with suggestions

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		<p>The Comms & Education Lead discussed Roles in Implementation of Strategy looking forward, the challenges and how we can be more proactive and communicate better including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we need to reach out to Member Organisations more? • Should we be doing more media, social media (Twitter, Instagram) <p>Gave an example like Water Night (Australian initiative) – Water off between 5 – 10pm, huge increase in water use awareness and change of usage habits.</p> <p>Discussed “Money down the Drain” (Scottish Water initiative) – reducing shower time by 2mins save approx. €120? Per year, this created a reduction in cold water use as well as hot water use, leading to savings for Scottish Water.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Need to be careful we don’t encroach on UE’s space on Water conservation.</p> <p>Chair explained that training would Assist on how we communicate. Query on how we are linking with Lawpro for the catchment pilots – It was explained that the Forum is mainly advising on public participation policy at present.</p> <p>We need to promote the Forum and the Forum’s work above anything else, if the public don’t know who we are how will they trust us when we advise on policy.</p> <p>It is up to members to send the Forum Newsletters to their organisations and further afield.</p>	<p>Enquire re Media training.</p>
5.0	DHLGH Strategy	<p>DHLGH Review of Statement Strategy 2021 - 2025</p> <p>The chair explained that the request re the review was only received Thursday evening (16/03/23) so now is the time to give our advice if we want a new direction, so approval in principle required today.</p> <p>The Research Lead provided an overview of the DHLGH review of strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1: Discussion Estuaries are in such a bad state, can we do more – Link Marine directive with WFD and reference FIILM. • Objective 2: Water Services – no discussion or questions • Objective 4 (Goal B): Rural Water – Discussion Effective governance of rural water sector – Multi Annual Rural Water Programme still not finalised (initial draft was to be finalised in 2021). The Forum have a remit in the rural water sector. There has been a high-level Rural Water Review completed by Tobin’s consulting. The Forum should have a briefing by the Department or the Authors to highlight areas that need improvement. • Forum needs to be looking at gaps in services when updating existing plans or developing strategic plans. • Include a point on the need to reduce leakage (developers are being tasked with finding leaks). • There should be a stronger action for water providers to implement the new Drinking Water Directive – Risk Assessments of Drinking Water catchments align with catchment assessments 	<p>Complete draft, circulate to members for comment & then finalise for submission to DHLGH by 30th March</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Housing: There need to be circular economy principles, green housing for the built environment, nature based solutions, (sustainable urban drainage, integrated wetland, rain gardens, permeable paving, etc.) <p>The Draft document to be updated to incorporate input from the meeting & circulated to members for feedback by Friday 24th March so it can be revised & sent to the DHLGH within the timeframe for submissions.</p> <p>Policy Update: Housing Commission</p> <p>The Research Lead explained that the DHLGH set up a sub-committee to talk about rural housing, they want to introduce the Forum and focus on rural water service and rural housing. Opportunity to discuss septic tanks (and link with WFD), private wells, drinking water quality in wells and linking to GWSs, and sustainable housing.</p> <p>Rural water strategic plan to look at extending schemes or linking to public supply.</p> <p>There needs to be a full role out of septic tank inspections – concern for nutrients reaching waterbodies and wells.</p>	
	<p>Research update</p>	<p>Research Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Research lead explained that there was a delay in completion of one of the policy briefs. • Public Participation tender closing on March 27th • Prof Conor Murphy, Maynooth has asked if Forum will be stakeholder in Project – Decision Making in Managing Droughts (governance based) <p>Potential Research Topics 2023</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A survey on Customer communications and level of awareness in relation to water supply/water quality. 2. Quality control of Drinking Water in Comparison to Food Production. 3. Pharmaceuticals <p>Survey on Customer communications and level of awareness in relation to water supply/water quality.</p> <p>The Research Lead explained that this would be a national survey focusing on where water comes from and who to contact if issues arise (water supply, water quality, leaks etc) and builds on previous work done by WAB.</p> <p>Value for Water Question is important – need to establish how people value water.</p> <p>It was agreed that asking about a change in opinion re metering could jeopardise answers to the rest of the survey & it was decided to omit that from this survey.</p> <p>Beneficial if the survey could include all water users, public, GWS and domestic well. This will benefit and inform the Forums position re rural water in the near future.</p> <p>Question if we should include domestic and non-domestic similar to WAB – could do this as part of a targeted repeat of WAB survey to assess trends.</p> <p>Tender document to be prepared & sent out to relevant Research companies.</p>	<p>Further research on topics</p> <p>Draft Customer Survey Tender and send out to Research companies.</p>

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		<p>Other Research Suggestions: Effects of Agriculture on Transitional Waters, especially on salmon and sea trout. Protection from sea fisheries in terms of water testing and chemicals used in salmon farming – Scope seen as more scientific and possibly too big for this type of Forum research. Comparison of pollutants contained in struvite v sludge</p>	
6	AOB	None	
7	Next meeting	Tuesday 25th April 2023 in the Aisling Hotel & by Hybrid.	Arrange meeting and venue