



## Plenary Meeting No. 51

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023 on Zoom

### Agreed Minutes

**Attendees Online:** Matt Crowe (Chair), Connie Rochford, Keith Hyland, , Dominic Cronin, David Wright, , Martin McEnroe, Liam Berne, Jean Rosney, Derrie Dillon, Charles Stanley Smith, Paul O’Brien, Tim Butter, Siobhan Ward, Sinead O’Brien, Ollan Herr, Denis Drennan, Brendan Fitzsimons, Bernadette Connolly, Issy Petrie.

**Apologies:** Tim Fenn, Neil Walker, Suzanne Linnane, Elaine McGoff, Barry Deane & Gerald Quain.

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

No.	Details	Summary	Action
1.1	<b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b>	The Chair welcomed members to the meeting & apologies were noted.	
1.1	<b>Consideration of minutes of last meeting</b>	The minutes of the Plenary meeting held on the 25 April were approved. The meeting noted the briefing to the Plenary on 22 <sup>nd</sup> May on “the Impact of Climate Change on Water Quality & Quantity”	Minutes to be placed on website.
2.0	<b>Corporate Issues</b>	<p>2.1 Update on the Forums expenditure to 30<sup>th</sup> May</p> <p><b>Expenditure YTD:</b> The SEO referenced the AFU Expenditure breakdown circulated to the members in advance of the meeting with total expenditure for the year to date is €210,397.</p> <p><b>AFU Budget for 2024:</b> The SEO explained that the DHLGH have requested submission of the forecasted expenditure to 31/12/23 along with the estimated 2024 budget by middle of June. The draft budget was discussed.</p> <p>AFU Implementation of Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research &amp; Policy Analysis Actions 2024</li> <li>- Comms &amp; Education Action 2024</li> </ul> <p><b>Budget Questions and Discussion</b> <i>Members queried if the Forum has sufficient staff &amp; if it would help with the work load to have another staff member? The SEO mentioned that we could look at dividing the Communications and Education roll as this was an original proposal which didn’t go ahead. The Forum would have to get DHLGH approval by</i></p>	

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		<p>submitting a business case for any increase in staffing. This is something that could be reviewed during 2023/24</p> <p>Members asked if the training budget was low? – SEO explained that it was similar to 2023 &amp; that we need to keep projections close enough to previous year.</p> <p>Members asked where the budget for Site Visits is included? SEO explained that it was included under meeting costs &amp; members travel and expenses.</p> <p>Members queried about the possibility of Staff attending relevant EU conferences or meetings. The SEO said that this was possible if relevant to the work of the Forum &amp; if there was sufficient budget</p> <p><i>Query if we had space in staffing budget for an intern?</i> Chair explained that it would be a big responsibility for staff to manage &amp; could be difficult if staff are not located in the same place.</p> <p>Members agreed that to submit the draft budget to the DHLGH.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Draft budget for 2024</b></p> <table border="0" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Item</th> <th style="text-align: right;">€</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Meeting Expenses</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€20,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Members Travel/Expenses</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€20,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Training and Facilitation</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€12,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Implementation of Strategy</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€137,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chairs allowance</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€12,030.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Secretariat Salary and Travel</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€450,920.79</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strategic Plan &amp; communications</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€10,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office &amp; IT Expenses</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€34,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Totals</b></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><b>€698,950.00</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Item	€	Meeting Expenses	€20,000.00	Members Travel/Expenses	€20,000.00	Training and Facilitation	€12,000.00	Implementation of Strategy	€137,000.00	Chairs allowance	€12,030.00	Secretariat Salary and Travel	€450,920.79	Strategic Plan & communications	€10,000.00	Office & IT Expenses	€34,000.00	<b>Totals</b>	<b>€698,950.00</b>	
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3.0	<b>Research &amp; Policy</b>	<p><b>Water Conservation</b></p> <p>The Research Lead updated the members on the Water Forum’s position paper on Water Conservation. Forum sent the Position to Department in mid-May – mostly positive feedback, highlighted areas where difficulties may arise (additional costs for new builds etc)</p> <p>Sent position paper &amp; advice to Minister O’Brien on 7<sup>th</sup> June, the Minister requested to meet Chair on 12<sup>th</sup> July. Propose to Focus on the Government led strategy.</p> <p>UEs Drought Data was discussed – suggest this be made available to public as its very useful.</p> <p>Comment: In GWS extra funding can be requested in areas where they know issues with drought are occurring, schemes notify members.</p> <p><b>2022 Water Climate Research Projects</b></p> <p>Approved the Research Reports on the Impact of Climate Change on Water Quality &amp; Climate Change on Water Quantity as reports to the Forum, to be uploaded on the website.</p> <p><b>Draft Advice to Climate Change Advisory Council</b></p> <p>Discussed the role of the Climate Change Advisory Council and the rationale for preparing a submission from the Forum.</p>	<p>Climate Research to be put on Website</p> <p>Send Letter to CCAC</p>																				

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		<p>Discussed content of letter and recommendations. Chair stated that he thinks it really important to get this information to the CCAC as soon as possible and suggest an engagement with them. Members approved the draft AFU letter to the Climate Change Advisory Council &amp; to the Adaption Committee regarding climate and water.</p> <p><b>Update on other research and policy actions:</b> The company Interactions Ltd had been selected for the Water Services Customer Survey.</p>	
4.0	<b>Recast of the UWWTD</b>	<p>Presentation on the <b>Recast of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive</b> by Averil Gannon, Policy Advisor with the Water Advisory Section of DHLGH</p> <p>Introduction to UWWTD by Chair</p> <p>Avril Discussed EU Negotiation Process and how Directives are approved.</p> <p><b>Where we are now with UWWTD</b></p> <p>European Commission: Working party meeting in Jan, Feb and March 2023 Swedish presidency published proposal on 1<sup>st</sup> June Final deadline has to happen before new MEPs are elected in July 2024, aiming towards Easter 2024.</p> <p>European Parliament: MEPs submitted comments May 5<sup>th</sup> EU Parliament text will be complete by end Oct Spanish presidency starting July, indicated they will have text agreed by October.</p> <p>Looking for written comments from AFU on text to bring this to Europe.</p> <p><b>Ireland Actions:</b> UWW Expert Group established Q1 2023 (group is expanding to get all relevant information) Briefed minister for HLGH and Water Finance Section DHLGH met reps from pharma &amp; cosmetic industry</p> <p><b>UWWTD – Overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambitious, tight timelines.</li> <li>• Widening scope of Directive to include smaller agglomerations</li> <li>• Extended producer responsibility for specific micro-pollutants (will be financed by specific pharma who produce these pollutants – uncertainty at member state level)</li> <li>• Requirements for energy neutrality for UWWTPs &amp; Collection Systems – options being discussed.</li> <li>• Significant policy and budgetary implications – risk assessment article</li> <li>• What we should be driving for is putting these WWTP in the right place (i.e., where there is an environmental need or a risk to human health).</li> </ul>	<p>AFU to write comment on current UWWTD text for Dept to include in submission to Europe</p>

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		<p><b>Main Points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide &amp; Connect networks to small agglomerations.</li> <li>• All agglomerations above 1000 p.e. to be provided with collections systems and all sources of domestic wastewater connected to this system.</li> <li>• Provide connections to collection systems if septic tanks are used for greater than 2% of the reported load in agglomerations of 2000 p.e.</li> <li>• Higher levels of treatment standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Secondary treatment for agglomerations &gt; 1000 p.e.</li> <li>○ Stricter N &amp; P limits – tertiary treatment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Quaternary treatment for larger plants (There would be 9 WWTPs in Ireland. There is push back on this – risk assessments, should be only where needed on all agglomerations &gt;2000 p.e.)</li> <li>• Extended Polluter Principle for specific micro pollutants (pharma &amp; cosmetics) – to pay for quaternary treatment</li> <li>• Energy neutrality: Will we be infringed if we can't reach this? Should it be in this directive?</li> <li>• Integrated UWW Management Plans – nature-based solutions, SWOs to be no more than 1% of the annual collected UWW load calculated in dry weather conditions.</li> <li>• UWW surveillance to monitor specific public health parameters</li> <li>• Risk Assessments and Risk management</li> </ul> <p>Department pushing for putting treatment plants where they are needed.</p> <p><b>Questions &amp; Discussion.</b></p> <p>Chair explained that the Forum were very happy to engage. AFU could be considered for the expert group, so we could make informed decisions.</p> <p><i>It was suggested that the Dept will engage with the Forum and look for comments directly (rather than through the Working Group).</i></p> <p>Q: The Original directive had appropriate treatment for anything over 2000 p.e., good that it's being lowered to 1000 p.e., but what about agglomerations of less than 1000 p.e.?</p> <p><i>Looking for risk assessments, so plants get appropriate treatments in the right place.</i></p> <p>Q. Storm Water Overflows are a huge issue in Ireland. Glad to hear there is more focus on this in the recast directive – anything further to say (we need to do something about it?)</p> <p><i>There is a push for nature-based solutions, Recast looking at monitoring every single flow which is practically not possible (discussing modelling being allowed) – a lot of discussion still.</i></p> <p>Q. Shouldn't sign up to something where we're going to miss the targets on. Question of how many countries would struggle?</p> <p><i>Denmark, Germany all have push back on this, there has to be reality and balance.</i></p>	

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		<p><i>There is a derogation for countries in a transition zone e.g. for countries with new treatment plants that are not up to new standard (Ireland can't avail of this)</i>  <i>Spain &amp; France are also supporting risk-based assessments</i></p> <p>Q. What is Ireland's position on extended polluter principle?  <i>It's a good idea, just not sure how it will be managed. Profit margins in generics will be passed on to consumer.</i></p> <p>Q. What's Ireland's positions on septic tanks connecting to collection system?  <i>Most people won't want to be required to connect their septic tanks to a collection system. Agree with risk-based approach – this could also be applied to the septic tank area.</i></p> <p>Comment: We have to move to a holding tank situation, we have been laggards in relation to WWT, you are trying to defend the indefensible.</p> <p>Q. What would be the level of price increase on Pharma and Personal care products, has a figure come up?  <i>Impact assessment gave some figures, think it's very underestimated.</i></p> <p>Comment: Forum supportive of risk-based approach.</p> <p>Q. What is the timeline for engagement?  <i>Timelines are really tight, have to have comments back by 19<sup>th</sup> of June – the sooner I can get your comments the better.</i>  <i>5<sup>th</sup> July and 20<sup>th</sup> July other deadlines.</i></p>	
5.0	<b>Education and Communications Actions</b>	<p>Water Conservation Press Release issued.  Chair interviews on Newstalk Breakfast, article on Newstalk Website and Leitrim Paper</p>	
6.0	<b>AOB</b>	<p>Member queried the need for a RBMP communications plan particularly if recommendations are not addressed. If necessary, the Forum has to be willing at some point to issue a press release saying we disagree with plans.</p> <p>The Chair was of the view that when the Forum receives the next draft of the Plan that we shouldn't be afraid of saying something at the appropriate time. If we think discussions with WPAC are not being effective, we can go to Minister.</p> <p>The Chair explained that the Forum needs to look at what we get next and make a judgment about whether our recommendations are being taken on board. If we are unhappy, we can just go straight to the Minister. We should work as a Forum to establish our views on the final plan.</p> <p>Question re update on getting a Fisheries' Rep on the Forum. SEO to give update on the membership at next plenary.</p>	
7	<b>Next meeting</b>	<b>Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 10.30am in the Ashling Hotel, Dublin &amp; Hybrid</b>	