



## Plenary Meeting No. 50

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Aisling Hotel / Zoom

Agreed Minutes

**Attendees:** Matt Crowe (Chair), Connie Rochford, Gerald Quain, Martin McEnroe, Dominic Cronin, Bernadette Connolly, Liam Berney.

**Attendees Online:** Elaine McGoff, Barry Deane, Jean Rosney, Derrie Dillon, Charles Stanley Smith, Paul O'Brien, Tim Butter, Siobhan Ward, Sinead O'Brien, Ollan Herr, Denis Drennan.

**Apologies:** Brendan Fitzsimons, Tim Fenn, Keith Hyland, Issy Petrie, Neil Walker, David Wright, Suzanne Linnane.

**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>	<p>The minutes of the Plenary meeting held on the 21 March were approved.</p> <p><b>Land use and Policy review</b> – The chair informed the meeting that he had been in contact with EPA with a view to arranging a speaker on the topic to the Forum over the summer months.</p> <p><b>The Annual Report</b> is complete and submitted to the DHLGH.</p> <p><b>Letter re IAS</b> completed, submitted and response received from the Minister.</p> <p><b>Department Statement of Strategy</b> submission submitted.</p>	Minutes to be placed on website.
2.0	<b>Corporate Issues</b>	<p>2.1 Update on the Forums expenditure to 31<sup>st</sup> March (attached)</p> <p><b>Budget:</b> Total spend for the year to date is €111,585.</p> <p><b>Correspondence</b> National Plan on IAS has commenced, and Martin McEnroe is representing the Forum. Next input from the Forum will be to comment on the draft plan.</p> <p>Quagga Mussel: The SEO and Martin McEnroe attended a meeting regarding the huge challenge of the Quagga Mussel on the River</p>	

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		<p>Shannon – Key issue is lack of enforcement on how these species get into the country.</p> <p><b>Meetings and Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Agricultural Catchment Programme</b> – Open Day (Timoleague) Friday 12<sup>th</sup> May – Members interested in attending to let us know. There are other Agricultural Catchments in Wexford, Monaghan, Louth, the Forum can look at visiting one of these in the future.</li> <li>• <b>Research on Climate &amp; Water</b> needs to be discussed. Need to decide as a team how to progress research – <b>Plenary to have a briefing on this on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May at 2-4pm</b> (online)</li> <li>• <b>EPA Climate conference</b> - Thurs 25<sup>th</sup> May, Members can register themselves online. It was mentioned that the Agricultural Sector should have been invited to speak at the event.</li> <li>• <b>Scheduled Plenary 13<sup>th</sup> June</b>, which is the day before the EPA Water Conference in Galway, so it was agreed to hold the meeting online at 10.00am</li> <li>• <b>EPA Water Conference 14-15<sup>th</sup> June</b>. The Forum will arrange registration &amp; accommodation like last year</li> </ul>	
3.0	<b>Water Conservation</b>	<p><b>3.1 Presentation on the draft Water Forum position paper on Water Conservation followed by discussion. (Document to follow)</b></p> <p>The research Lead presented the steps to forming Forum’s position on Water Conservation. Sarah Cotterill has held interviews with Gov/UK Gov/Waterwise to try and get better ideas on what we can recommend. There has also been some International Interest in the Non-domestic research.</p> <p>Draft Position Paper Background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases in length and magnitude of summer drought.</li> <li>• Population growth &amp; ageing infrastructure</li> <li>• Where can we be more water efficient.</li> <li>• Outline multiple benefits of Water Conservation</li> <li>• Reiterated our role in Water Conservation</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendations – Proposed in the draft position paper related to Government led Strategy.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Call for a government led Strategy on Water conservation in Ireland.</li> <li>2. National Water Conservation Team</li> <li>3. Building Regs reviewed to include mandatory water efficiency measures.</li> <li>4. Water efficiency labelling accompanied by education.</li> <li>5. Research – Cost Benefit Analysis for new builds</li> </ol> <p><b>Discussion:</b></p> <p>Structure of Paper. Two points at beginning are points we want to get across. These need to be highlighted and the rest of the recommendations need to support this.</p> <p><b>Cost Benefit Analysis:</b></p> <p>Question if Water Conservation measures will add to the cost of the construction of a new home. Important to try to have this included into building regs.</p>	Include box with summary of proposals.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy, easy to do it at new build stage, more expensive to retrofit. This would be similar for water.</li> <li>• Serious question is Who bears the cost (homeowner or schemes/grants)</li> <li>• Rainwater harvesting recommendation are very vague, paper only mentions community level rainwater harvesting.</li> <li>• Can we be a bit bolder in suggesting CBA takes account of environmental benefits also, need to look at grants/incentives. One of the recommendations is to look at incentives.</li> <li>• If it costs €1.85 for 1000L of water, this equates to €400 per house per annum. Water conservation which saved 20L of water a day equates to €46 per house.</li> <li>• Grants are a double-edged sword – waiting for funding to come through.</li> <li>• Rainwater harvesting for Agriculture is grant aided – but do they work? Grant is important for publicity, could be difficult to get this through with current housing crisis and increased cost of building a house, therefore huge incentive required.</li> <li>• Sarah outlined it in her research that this should be part of the BER rating, which is also a consideration.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion Rainwater Harvesting:</b></p> <p>Q. Should rainwater harvesting not be mandatory for all new builds.</p> <p>Rainwater harvesting is covered in building regs, but it is optional.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If all new builds have a water use target, most of them will have to use rainwater harvesting to meet that target. Others may use greywater re-use. The target allows flexibility in the water conservation technologies used.</i></li> </ul> <p>Q. Other EU countries have more progressive water conservation measures, can we look at these.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The research Lead explained that the research presented many international examples, however we can relate to the UK most, it is hard to compare drier countries with Ireland.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Comment:</b> Rainwater harvesting installed at same time as retrofit, very few enquires once idea of charges went away.</p> <p>UE only people baring cost of water at moment, full treatment completely unnecessary for flushing of toilets reducing cost of treatment chemicals. Government action required for rainwater harvesting in water stressed areas for toilet flushing at minimum.</p> <p>Member explained that he wasn't arguing for thousands of euros for Rainwater Harvesting in housing, contractors pushing homeowners to put in most expensive system. Simple system is all that's needed.</p> <p>Building Regs – RH &amp; Greywater already covered, level of treatment required for greywater to be reused.</p> <p>The Chair explained that a government lead approach to water conservation is the Forums main priority – then there will be many opportunities for the forum to discuss what can be done.</p> <p><b>Final Comments:</b></p>	

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		<p><b>Recommendations: Transparency and Oversight</b>  Transparency and accountability for water sustainability in the planning process.  Data Transparency around water use. – should be shared with water forum and to society for analysis and decision making.  Private Abstractions – do not engage with Water Stewardship Initiatives</p> <p><b>Education and Awareness Recommendations</b>  National - National awareness campaign  Community – Community initiatives, water champions  Formal and Non-Formal Education – Align and establish synergies between these. – Very little reference to water in education at the moment, need to bring it in via SDGs and Climate Education.</p> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firmly believe no matter what regs you bring in, not everyone will do it.</li> <li>• Supportive of transparency of water use, control of water use is in line with WFD, especially in vulnerable catchments.</li> <li>• Certain parts of the country are at greater risk than others. We should outline the role of water conservation in terms of catchment management. – strong reason for government lead approach to water conservation.</li> <li>• In favour of role of Education Awareness</li> <li>• If we were suggesting EPA should provide oversight in future planning for water users, the EPA would need more staff, so this would delay recommendations.</li> <li>• We need to present recommendations for water management, these should not be deterred by resourcing issues.</li> <li>• In the background on climate impacts on river flow in 37 Catchments (seems low/slow), the reference included to 2080 seems very far away, could we include a reference that has impacts in the nearer future.</li> <li>• Water footprint in other things, (fashion, food etc)</li> </ul> <p><b>Engagement plan for the AFU Water Conservation position paper</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange Meeting with UE on recommendations.</li> <li>• Media press release in July, newsletter, local and national messages.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion</b>  Timing is key – ideally it must be done when it is dry in the summer (not when it is raining in the autumn).  The Chair was of the view that it is in the control of the Forum when it submits the document &amp; that it has control over how it promotes the advice.</p> <p>Important distinction between a Government &amp; Uisce Eireann lead approach.</p>	
4.0	Education & Communications actions	Update on Education & Communication Actions Newsletter to be published at the end of the month. Proposing an in-person conference that will share research outcomes (Future of water in Ireland, bringing in FILLM) – need to	Arrange for a venue for AFU Conference/seminar

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		start confirm theme, date & venue. – Timing (Oct/Nov), need to start planning now.	
5.0	Research & Policy actions	<p><b>5.1 To receive update on Research &amp; Policy Actions</b></p> <p>The Research lead provided an overview of the Research &amp; Policy areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate research reports will be circulated to members once final review is complete (start of May)</li> <li>• The Tender for the National Survey on Water Services is being finalised and will be advertised later this week.</li> <li>• Public Participation Research has been awarded to DkIT kick off meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> April.</li> </ul> <p><b>Policy Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UE 4<sup>th</sup> Regional Plan (Southeast) will be open for public consultation shortly. UE have requested to provide a briefing to Forum. Query if members would like to attend briefing or for staff to attend and then provide information to the members. <i>Some members of the WSSC expressed an interest in attending the briefing.</i></li> <li>• CRU Report – UE have submitted report to CRU on the implementation of the recommendations made by Scottish Water. This could be discussed with UE liaison group when it meets UE.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <p>Can we put a figure into the national survey to determine how much additional cost the public would spend on water conservation technologies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This could be discussed at a later date once there is agreement by Department to implement a water conservation strategy.</li> </ul> <p>Member suggested additional research on Struvite to determine toxicity.</p> <p>A. <i>Research Lead explained that this is too technical &amp; more for scientific research rather than a Forum research call. Suggest Teagasc or EPA could do this.</i></p> <p><b>Update on Waters of Life</b></p> <p>– 6 demonstration catchments</p> <p>Workshops for results-based payment scheme – Research Lead asked to give presentation on FILLM.</p> <p><b>Update on engagement with LAWPRO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lawpro holding off on development of the discussion paper until RBMP is published- Scoping workshops starting in Sept.</li> <li>• Currently developing template for Catchment Management Plans for piloting in 2024.</li> <li>• Also working on RMCEI (minimum inspections) working with EPA and LAs, to determine how reporting can be done at catchment level.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion</b></p>	Team & available members of the WSSC to meet UE for briefing.

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		<p>Can we get more information on Catchment-Community Fora</p> <p>A. Research Lead explained that Lawpro are really interested in getting our feedback on the Fora to discuss possible the options.</p> <p>Can we ask Lawpro what their engagement plans are with the Forum,</p> <p>A. <i>The Chair was of the view that the Forum should be intensely engaging with Lawpro once RBMP and Catchment Management Plans are published – greater influence the more we collaborate with them.</i></p>	
6.0	Update on the RBMP	<p><b>Update on the development of the RBMP</b></p> <p>The Chair informed the meeting that he had spoken to David Flynn, DHLGH yesterday &amp; that the Staff in the Dept are still working on editing the RBMP document. The date is not yet set for WPAC meeting.</p> <p>From a sequencing perspective the Forum will receive a copy of the RBMP prior to WPAC meeting to formulate position and provide advice in advance of their meeting. The Forum will need to focus on top level recommendations when reviewing as we are time constrained. Looking to see how these issues have been incorporated into Plan. We do not know yet when final Plan will be published – hopefully in time for EPA water conference. We can control what we want to do in relation to the next WPAC meeting.</p> <p>When plan is completed, we need to do a full review of all recommendations through the CMSC and report back to the Plenary.</p> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worth trying to frame already what tone we are going to take, need to highlight what we can and cannot accept.</li> <li>• WPAC meeting is important, but we need a wider plan, as we might not get as many recommendations as we like, so who are we going to meet to talk about this (Dept, minister etc)</li> <li>• Proposed plan of action between now and sign off. Need to be assertive and pull out all the stops to get what we want.</li> <li>• Need to use precise language understandable by all.</li> <li>• Forum has advisory role – even if we don't agree with all of the plan, we need to get over this and provide advice on the implementation of the plan.</li> </ul> <p><b>Chair:</b> Forum and team have been engaging with Dept in a very meaning full way for this cycle. Need to focus on implementation now and what happens next. Equally we can get fully behind it if the bulk of our recommendations have been met.</p>	Agree strategy and redlines in advance
7	<b>AOB</b>	None	
8	<b>Next meeting</b>	<b>Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at 10.00am an ZOOM.</b>	