



**Plenary Meeting**  
**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024**  
**Aisling Hotel / Zoom**

**Attendees:** Matt Crowe (Chair), Connie Rochford, Bernadette Connolly, Liam Berney, Charles Stanley Smith, Ollan Herr, Martin McEnroe, Tim Butter, Brendan Fitzsimons, Barry Deane, Dominic Cronin, Keith Hyland, Derrie Dillon, Denis Drennan, Neil Walker, Gerald Quain, Suzanne Linnane, David Wright

**Attendees Online:** Jean Rosney, Sinead O’Brien

**Apologies:** Tim Fenn, Issy Petrie, Paul O’Brien, Elaine McGoff, Siobhan Ward.

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

No.	Details	Summary	Action
1.1	<b>Welcome &amp; Minutes</b>	<p><b>1.1 Welcome and apologies.</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. <b>Consideration of draft minutes of Meeting No. 55 held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024</b></p> <p>Minutes were agreed &amp; adopted</p>	Place minutes on the website
2.1	<b>Corporate Update</b>	<p><b>2.1 To receive update on the Forums expenditure to year end 2023.</b></p> <p>The SEO explained that Forum expenditure to year end 2023 was €645,756 &amp; went through the breakdown. The DHLGH have allocated a budget of €698,549 to the Forum for 2024 as detailed in the allocation letter circulated to the members.</p> <p><b>2.2 To note correspondence-</b> letter on allocation of funding was noted</p> <p><b>Update on Forum Membership nomination process for appointment by the Minister for Housing Local Government &amp; Heritage.</b> Awaiting appointment by the Minister. Twelve of the current members have put their names forward for reappointment along with thirteen new nominees for appointment to the Forum.</p> <p>Chair thanked the Members who are stepping down for their contribution to the Forum over many years. Chair &amp; SEO acknowledged members engagement, loyalty and commitment to the Forum and Water Quality. Members had opportunity to speak about their time on the Forum and hopes for the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggestion that there be an establishment of a Forum Alumni for past members who would like to be kept up to date on any Forum Research and Policy updates.</li> <li>• Annual meeting suggested for past members to attend.</li> </ul>	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idea of keeping any past members who are interested updated with the weekly newsletter or other information</li> <li>• It was good to be able to deal with the concept that sometimes a Forum member can't endorse the position of the Forum.</li> </ul> <p>Membership Induction discussed &amp; planned for 28<sup>th</sup> February for new members only and then introduction team building/plenary meeting on March 12<sup>th</sup> with all members in person.</p> <p>Question: What will be done with the Water and Catchment Standing Committees? Response: Both Standing Committees will be reformed with members from the various sectors. If there is a need for a standing committee meeting during the induction process it was agreed that the current Standing Committee members can still join if they are needed. Chair happy to engage with existing and new members together if required.</p> <p>A package of information will be sent out (e.g., Strategy, Annual report, background information on the Forum, etc.)</p>	
3.1	<b>Work programme 2024</b>	<p><b>2.3 Water Forum key priority areas &amp; advice for 2024</b></p> <p>Presentation on Action Plan &amp; Key Focus Areas for 2024- powerpoint circulated: The Staff Team went through the action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RBMP finalisation and engagement plan with sectoral bodies. Series of meetings proposed for implementation. Q1 – Q4.</li> <li>• Consultation on Nitrates Action Plan Q1-Q2</li> <li>• Public participation – Research Dissemination and Policy Recommendations</li> <li>• Rural Water Review and Multi-Annual Programme Q1/Q2</li> <li>• CRU – Non Domestic Tariffs and Trade Effluent Q1</li> <li>• UE; Customer Services (Q3/Q4)</li> <li>• Water Conservation (ongoing engagement), proposal for CBA commissioned research.</li> <li>• Water and Climate – DECC Climate Action Plan Consultation Q1-Q2, Review Climate Adaptation Plans for Water Q2-Q3.</li> <li>• Programme for Government – Research Dissemination and policy recommendations. Q2-Q3</li> </ul> <p>Discussion</p> <p><b>Rural Water Services</b></p> <p>The WSSC proposed that the Forum should request a seat on the DHLGH Rural Water Working Group as it has an advisory role re Rural water. The Plenary agreed that we should proceed to engage with the DHLGH Rural Water Section to determine if AFU could be represented, which will be discussed further with the WSSC. – Approved.</p> <p>Discussion;</p> <p>Suggestion re the Forum developing a type of manifesto on Water coming into Elections Period – Members of the view that the Forum would need to be careful in this space as the Forum is an Advisory Stakeholder body to the Minister. Some members were completely against getting politically involved &amp; expressed the need for caution &amp; suggested that members are more than welcome to advocate for water when representing their own individual organisations to their own TDs without involving the Forum.</p>	

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		<p>It was suggested that the Forum should wait until the new Minister is in place and request a meeting with AFU and discuss Forum positions. It would be valuable to have information ready for this type of briefing with a new Minister.</p> <p>Comment: There is a huge amount of work planned for 2024, It is difficult for everyone to be engaged with all the topics in the upcoming year, so he would suggest that work is prioritised so that new members to have time to be engaged.</p> <p>Comment: Agree there is a lot of work planned for 2024, however there is a gap on focus on estuarine, coastal and marine waters.</p>	
4.0	<b>Policy and Research Actions</b>	<p><b>4.1 Research Update</b></p> <p>The research Lead discussed a proposed commissioned research project <i>“A cost benefit analysis (CBA) of amending the building regulations or deep retrofitting in Ireland to improve water efficiency for a series of water use targets for buildings (e.g. 110 L, 100L, 95L and 85L per person per day)”</i> with a budget of €40,000-€50,000.</p> <p><b>Proposed Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the Forum’s advisory role on water conservation, to both the Minister and officials of DHLGH</li> <li>• Provide technical support material for the discussion on the need to revise building regulations in Ireland</li> <li>• The objective of the project is in line with recommendations by the JOC for the need for an ambitious amendment of the building regulations in Ireland to improve water efficiency</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Objective</b></p> <p>A range of scenarios for water use targets (e.g. 110 L, 100L, 90L, 80L per person per day) should be modelled over a 25 year time span, and compared with a business as usual case to calculate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water saved</li> <li>• heating energy saved</li> <li>• reduction in cost of supplying water</li> <li>• carbon dioxide saved through reduced water supply</li> <li>• reduced wastewater treatment</li> </ul> <p>This research would support the Forums advisory role, the lack of known additional costs is a barrier to make progress on the Forum’s position. Members were very supportive of this proposed project which follows on from our previous work on water conservation &amp; it was agreed to proceed with the tendering process.</p> <p><b>Interreg Update</b></p> <p>Propose that AFU would be an observer / associate organisation to the Interreg Project on water efficiency. This would address previous concerns re administrative and time commitments of being a full partner. An associate organisation would allow the Forum to be involved in the project, offer expertise, attend meetings and take learnings from project without requiring funding – Approved</p> <p><b>Update Programme for Government – dissemination in February</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong Policy Recommendations re Water Commitments (of which Water Quality and Water Conservation performed worst)</li> </ul> <p><b>Update on Public Participation – dissemination in February</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research indicates there is no perfect example of an approach to public participation, many countries think Ireland is doing very well. Research will be shared with public participation working group and catchment management group when review is complete.</li> </ul>	

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		<p><b>Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme (MARWP) 2024 – 2026</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learnings from Tobin’s report and previous programmes. This is part of the Programme for Government, personnel changes within the Department have been more engaged, there is a partnership approach.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2 Policy Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DHLGH Public Consultation on Nitrates (Feb/March)</li> <li>• EU Survey – Nitrates</li> </ul> <p>Series of questions, Forum does not have a position on all of them and there is an opportunity to give comments. This is the start of the commission looking at the Nitrates Directive. Chair proposes writing letter to Commission on the topic and let them know our role and the policy areas we cover. NESC are also taking an interest in this, so propose to invite NESC to present to the Forum when new members are here. Comment: EU often invites people over to engage on a particular topic, perhaps the Forum should get an invite to see what is going on in this area (nitrates).</p> <p>Comment: European Economic and Social Committee – have good research and are acutely aware of water issues/water scarcity and are drafting a position called the “Blue Deal.”</p> <p><b>CRU Public Consultation on non-domestic tariffs and trade effluent – for further discussion at WSSC.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of consultation provided. Concerns raised that this is outside the scope of the Forum, very technical and focused on economics. Suggestions made to keep it at a high level, relevant to the Forum’s strategic objectives. Comment that we should respond to the consultation, even if it is brief. The Forum is listed as a key stakeholder for the consultation. Draft Submission will be circulated and discussed with WSSC.</li> </ul> <p><b>RBMP:</b></p> <p>Chair outlined that the DHLGH seem to have addressed many of the Forum’s recommendations, therefore we should support these changes. Comment – key messages should be agreed on Forum’s position on the plan. Concern by some members re. the low level of expected outcome for the plan.</p>	
5.1	<b>Education &amp; Communications actions</b>	<p>To receive update on Education &amp; Communication Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on the Water Customer Survey dissemination</li> <li>• Update on Carr Communications &amp; Comms Action Plan for 2024</li> </ul> <p>Communications plan for RBMP discussed. Update on 2024 BT Young Scientist Exhibition 97% of Students said they wanted to learn more about water. Great Engagement with student and teachers. Article on Survey with Students</p>	
6	<b>AOB</b>		
7	<b>Confirm date for next Plenary meeting</b>	7.1 To confirm the date & location of the next Plenary meeting.	
8	<b>Next Plenary meeting</b>	Tuesday 12 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 Plenary to include Team building workshop	Arrange meeting