



**Plenary Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024**  
**Ashling Hotel, Dublin**

**Attendees:** Matt Crowe, Dominic Cronin, Steve Conlon, Martin McEnroe, Michael Kenny, Connie Rochford, Sinead O’Brien, Jean Rosney, Charles Stanley-Smith, Suzanne Linnane, Fintan Kelly, Elaine McGoff, Ciarán Maguire, Keith Hyland, David Downes, Tadhg Buckley, Maria O’Gorman, Maria Snell, Karin Dubsky, Neil Walker, Eamon Carroll

**Apologies:** Karan O’Loughlin, Eimear Manning, David Wright, Constanze O’Toole, Marie Doyle,

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

| No. | Details                      | Summary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Action                                                            |
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| 1.0 | <b>Welcome &amp; Minutes</b> | <p><b>1.1 Welcome and apologies</b><br/> Chair welcomed members, discussed communications, and introduced Agenda.<br/> Welcomed new member Mark Farrelly from the National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS)</p> <p><b>1.2 Consideration of draft minutes of Meeting no. 61 held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024 in the Ashling Hotel, Dublin</b><br/> Minutes Approved</p> <p><b>1.3 Matters arising from the minutes</b><br/> Complex Minutes – due to lots of input from members<br/> Minutes are excellent and captures essence of meetings</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Minutes to be published on Forum Website                          |
| 2.0 | <b>Corporate Update</b>      | <p><b>2.1 Update on Forum’s expenditure to 30/09/24</b><br/> The SEO explained that Forum expenditure to the end of September 2024 was €471,487.11. Additional funds given by DHLGH to cover salary increases due to National Wage Agreement.</p> <p>2023 Annual Report – discussed publication process.</p> <p><b>2.1 To agree Schedule of Plenary meetings for 2025</b><br/> Discussed next year’s Plenary meeting schedule.<br/> Q: A member queried if there is unspent funding in the Forums budget at end of year, can it be used for other projects. The SEO explained that the Forums budget is divided into various categories of expenditure between salary &amp; non salary cost &amp; is submitted to the DHLGH about 6 months in advance and agreed with the DHLGH from when the funding is allocated. He explained that we have occasionally carried out an extra bit of research when funding was</p> | Send out Outlook Calendar reminders for next year’s Plenary dates |

| No. | Details                                       | Summary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Action                                                                                                   |
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|     |                                               | available however, spending needs to be done by end of November so it can be recouped from the DHLGH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                          |
| 3.0 | <b>Education &amp; Communications actions</b> | <p><b>3.1 To receive update on the Forum's Climate &amp; Water Conference scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> November</b></p> <p>Tullamore Court Hotel, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024</p> <p>Discussed reasons for keeping the conference format for the day rather than a workshop format. We can look at opportunities for potential workshops next year. The Executive have been meeting the speakers to plan the different sessions. Discussed what the various speakers will be speaking about during the sessions and why. Asked the members to be engaged in the Q&amp;A after each session.</p> <p>Chair: Conference is important because some people are not aware of the connection between Water and Climate Change, and a Catchment Based solution is the best way to approach adaptation.</p> <p>Comment: Accept the programme but would like to advocate for more workshop type events in the future as conferences can sometimes be too hierarchal.</p> <p>Comment: Is there specific outcomes or objectives for the day that that member can focus on. We should be taking notes on what are the next steps.</p> <p>Comment: Can you facilitate a board/sheet for people who are shy to write down any questions they might have.</p> <p><b>3.2 Update on the Forum's Draft Social Media strategy</b></p> <p>The Forum sought quotations from a number of companies who had experience in the area of developing SM plans &amp; strategies &amp; Fuzion were awarded the work to develop the Forum's social media strategy; Draft strategy is now in place and the Executive is working on the social media plan. Comms Lead discussed the idea of a consistent image across all platforms.</p> <p>Would like to link in with all member organisations on Twitter if they are active. We will be setting up Facebook and Instagram accounts in a staged approach next year.</p> <p>Members to send in ideas for #hastags</p> <p>It would be beneficial if member organisations would consider sharing Forum content.</p> <p>Chair: Our role is sharing information on social media and not reacting to controversial posts. We need to be careful because we represent all the members. The Chair asked if members have any words of advice for the Forum from their own experiences?</p> <p>Comment: The relevance of the Forum is important, to let people know how you carry out the work.</p> <p>The Forum also has a LinkedIn account, but it needs to be further developed.</p> | <p>Draft a Report on the Conference</p> <p>Facilitate a board/sheet/ at the conference for questions</p> |

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|     |         | <p>Comment: Posts are not doing the Forum full justice in the work that we do. Need to include some of the stronger advice from previous positions.</p> <p>Q: Should there be a Comms Group set up? A: Not a bad idea at some point.</p> <p>Comment: Members suggested caution when using some social media platforms.</p> <p>Comment: Each type of SM has different advantages, so I wouldn't rule out any platform. Be proactive in blocking people where necessary.</p> <p>Use #hashtags for different disciplines, so get familiar with them.</p> <p>Comment: Can't get to into the weeds with topics but do need to soften the message at times.</p> <p>Comment: Make sure that we post information that the Forum agrees with.</p> <p>Response: The team are developing a Bank of Key Messages that will have Forum approval.</p> <p>Comment: Videos are really important in social media to communicate messages.</p> <p>Q: Should we be more focused on Traditional Media and Local Radio?</p> <p>A: We have a separate communications plan and also tag traditional media social posts. National media is more within our remit it will reach more people.</p> <p>Comment: Comms should be communicating with local radio, figures on local radio are huge and will get local conversations going. Irish Rural Link uses local radio regularly and could bring Forum messages to Local Radio.</p> <p>A: This is the Chairs role at the moment, but we could look into it</p> <p>Q: Is there a comms plan for the year ahead – we all agree on UWWT, so we need to plan for this. A: This is the topic we were going to start with.</p> <p>Chair: Need to figure out how to disseminate the information back to the members organisations. Way to start the UWWT issue is within the WSSC Standing committee and to then bring to the Plenary. Executive can circulate UWWT Key Messages for Forum approval.</p> <p>Team will take the opportunity to review &amp; discuss the members ideas and how they will contribute to the plan, then bring it back to members.</p> <p><b>3.3 Update on the Forum's participation in the BT Young Scientist Exhibition in January 2025</b></p> <p>Discussed the work the Forum do at BTYSE and members engagement at the event. Discussed opportunities to talk to students and teachers and get people engaged and interested in teaching about water in schools.</p> | <p>Possibility of setting up a Comms Group in the future</p> <p>Discuss members Social Media ideas and how they can be incorporated into the SM Plan, then bring back to members</p> |

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|     |          | Asked members to consider getting involved in the event (some members expressed that they would be happy to help out).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 3.0 | Research | <p><b>4.1 To approve the Water Forum’s Research strategy- thematic areas &amp; publication policy</b></p> <p>Discussed 5 thematic areas of the Research Strategy and additional input from last Plenary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RBMP</li> <li>• Future Proofing Irelands Water Resources</li> <li>• Water Quality for Public Health</li> <li>• Coastal and Marine Water Policy</li> <li>• Water and Wastewater Management</li> </ul> <p>Comment: SOE conference last week, estuaries are at risk yet had the least coverage and input, suggest Transitional waters are added.</p> <p>Topics Approved</p> <p>Research Lead discussed the Publication Policy. Research reports and policy briefs are published as a report to the Forum, it is independent research and should be published on the website. We may decide to develop a position following the research which would need to be approved by the Plenary – agreed by all.</p> <p><b>Members agree to publish research (commissioned or internal) on the website as ‘Report to the Forum.’</b></p> <p><b>4.2 To approve Proposed Research Topics for 2025</b></p> <p>Research Executive discussed the Water Quality Survey and WFD/MSFD Progress research topics.</p> <p>Comment: The Executive should review the questions from the last survey to see if there are any still relevant to this survey.</p> <p>Chair: Talk on trust and communications in the last plenary, so would like to do work in this area</p> <p>Survey questions will be drafted and discussed with the Public Participation Working Group.</p> <p>Both Topics Approved, Team will proceed to developing a draft tender.</p> <p><b>4.3 To approve the publication of the <i>Non-Domestic Water Conservation Report</i> on the AFU website</b></p> <p>Research Lead provided overview of the research: Research started in 2022 internally, it started with an assessment of EPA abstraction data. In Q4 of 2022, the Forum decided to commission research to follow on from the domestic water conservation. While the research was completed in 2023 and presented to the WSSC, due to external reasons the reports were only finalised in recent months.</p> | <p>Change thematic area 4 to “Coastal, Transitional and Marine water policy”</p> <p>Publish Research as “reports to the Forum” once research has been presented to the Forum</p> <p>Check Qs from last survey to see if we can repeat any.</p> <p>Draft survey questions</p> <p>Draft research tenders.</p> |

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|     |               | <p>Research Lead provided overview of different sections in the research report, including</p> <p>Discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abstraction types and volumetric distribution of abstractions</li> <li>• Uisce Eireann regional non-domestic users relating this to water resource zones supply demand deficits</li> <li>• International case study and best practice in transparency re average consumption within sectors</li> </ul> <p><b>7 Policy Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address data gaps and transparency: 2023 EPA abstraction data gives names of businesses. We can add a few sentences to highlight this.</li> <li>• Refine demand projections</li> <li>• Innovate and scale up best practices – where sectors can improve in their water use.</li> <li>• Strengthening Governance – water demand between users. (how do UE decide who gets the water in areas where there is a deficit – needs more help and oversight)</li> <li>• Improve accountability through specific targets</li> <li>• Better enforcement</li> <li>• Independent oversight – cumulative impacts of abstractions/water users in a catchment.</li> </ul> <p>Comment: suggestion to change the title from <b>Policy Brief</b> to be change to <b>Research Summary</b> to avoid confusion that it is a position of the Forum.</p> <p>It was agreed to publish this on website and to send it to UE directly as requested.</p> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <p>Chair: We should agree to publish it. It then needs to go back to the WSSC to see where we bring this in terms of policy advice.</p> <p>Comment: Policy Brief implies that this is a position of the Forum Chair – agree today name changes to “Research Summary,” publish the main report.</p> <p>Research Lead: Outlined Data Centre Research, which was done internally in 2022, circulated to members in advance of the meeting. Request to publish the report on the AFU website. Approved.</p> <p>Action: Publish Data Centre Research</p> | <p>“Policy Brief” to be changed to “Research Summary” which will also be published as a report to the Forum</p> <p>Publish Data Centre Research</p> |
| 4.0 | <b>Policy</b> | <p><b>5.1 To approve the Forum’s Recommendations on Water Related Priorities for the next Programme for Government &amp; to agree a dissemination plan.</b></p> <p>Research Lead discussed recommendations, which were discussed in detail at the last Plenary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Level, cross departmental</li> <li>• Water Services and Water Infrastructure</li> <li>• Water Conservation and Water Quality</li> <li>• Water Action Plan and WFD</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>Publish PfG Recommendations on the website and send to DHLGH Officials</p>                                                                       |

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|     |                                       | <p>Chair: It was agreed to approve the PfG recommendations document for publication on the Forums website and to send the document to the DHLGH, WAU officials. Engagement with Media should be done after an election.</p> <p>Comment: Some members were of the view that the Forum should send the document to the Political Advisors as you don't know who the Ministers are going to be until after election.</p> <p>The Chair was of the view that individual members could contact advisors themselves, but the Forum shouldn't get political about this.</p> <p><b>5.2 Update from the Catchment Management standing Committee on the Forums Draft Sectoral Engagement Plan &amp; upcoming meeting with LAWPRO.</b></p> <p>Research Lead outlined how the Forum will follow up on the implementation of the Water Action Plan via the Sectoral Action Work Plans and the Catchment Management Work Plans. CMSC will engage with the DHLGH on implementation.</p> <p>She explained that the Forum plans to meet with LAWPRO in November to discuss the Templates for the Sectoral Action Work Plans before they are finalised, so that we can provide input.</p> <p>Research Lead outlined draft meeting schedule proposed with sectoral bodies for WAP.</p> <p>Research Lead outlined that we do not have dates for Nitrates Action Plan Interim Review public consultation, we expect it to be over the coming weeks.</p> <p>Comment: Should we communicate that the DHLGH should allow sufficient time for this nitrates consultation and to not do it over Christmas.</p> <p>The Department are waiting on the Nature Impact Statements, suggest contacting WAU and highlight the need to adequate public engagement, and sufficient time to make changes following consultation.</p> <p>Q: Do LAWPRO already know that the Forum would like to have input into the templates before they are finalised? Yes</p> <p>Q: what is the timeline for the NAP interim review and how it relates to the derogation, what is the actual process. A: You have to do a NAP whether you need a derogation or not – To follow up on this clarification</p> | Note contact WAU about the nitrates consultation and the need for meaningful public engagement |
| 6   | AOB                                   | <p><b>6.1 Any other Business</b></p> <p>Discuss UWWT issue at the WSSC – to be put on Agenda for next meeting</p> <p>Private Well research is almost complete, to be presented either the 8<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> November.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                |
| 7   | Confirm date for next Plenary meeting | <p><b>7.1 Confirm the date &amp; location of the next Plenary meeting.</b></p> <p>Plenary Meeting:<br/>Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December in the Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                |

