

Draft Minutes of the Plenary Meeting
Tuesday 20th January 2026
Ashling Hotel

Attendees: Matt Crowe, Dominic Cronin, Martin McEnroe, Marie Doyle, Michael Kenny, Connie Rochford, Juan Pablo Martinez, Eamon Carroll, Jean Rosney, Mark Farrelly, Maria O’Gorman, Constanze O’Toole, Suzanne Linnane, Karin Dubsy

Apologies: Sinead O’Brien, Elaine McGoff, Steve Conlon, Brendan O’Brien, Maria Snell, Fintan Kelly, Keith Hyland, Tadhg Buckley, David Wright, Eimear Manning, Charles Stanley-Smith, Ciarán Maguire

In Attendance: Donal Purcell, Triona McGrath, Divya Flynn, Aisling Corkery
Guest Speakers: Claire Rountree, Kyle Maher (Interactions Research)

No.	Item	Details
1	Apologies & Minutes	<p>Welcome The chair welcomed new member Juan Pablo Martinez from IBEC and gave condolences to Martin McEnroe on the death of his brother.</p> <p>Declaration of Conflicts of Interest There were no conflicts of interest declared.</p> <p>Consideration of draft minutes of Meeting No. 70 held on 9th December 2025 The minutes were approved by the members.</p> <p>Matters arising: None</p> <p>Action: The approved minutes to be published on the Forum website</p>
2.	National Public Water Consumer Survey	<p>2.1 Presentation from Interactions Research on the findings of the National Public Water Consumer Survey completed for the Forum in 2025. <i>This includes information on water supply, customer services, access to information, communication channels etc. - presented by Claire Rountree</i></p> <p>Research Lead gave an overview of the previous survey carried out by the Water Advisory Board (WAB) in 2021 and previous Forum survey completed in 2023. Provided overview of survey design and methodology. Quantitative survey (National Representative Sample + Face to Face Survey)</p> <p><i>Home Water Supply – 1056 Total UE Customers</i> 213 Face to Face targeting areas with recent disruptions (UE Customers) 852 National Survey (UE Customers)</p> <p><i>Customers Experience of Water Supply Issues</i> Taste & Colour largest issue immerging.</p> <p><i>Contact Channels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of UE consumers know to contact UE with a query or complaint; this has improved since the 2021 WAB survey.

- 1 in 3 have received advanced notice of interruptions (improvement on 1 in 5 from WAB where UE text alert service wasn't in place).

Customer Service Experience

- Low levels of customer service experience overall (both national and face to face). Lower satisfaction levels in the Face-to-Face samples
- There was also a low level of satisfaction in follow up to complaints / queries.
- Water Conservation – Customers supportive of conservation and feel positive to support conservation. Still 1 in 4 are sceptical on the need or impact of conservation measures.

Satisfaction with Drinking Water Quality

High level of satisfaction in drinking water quality (70% of national sample either quite or very satisfied)

Lower levels of satisfaction reported in Face to Face survey (41% satisfied)

Trust in Supply

Generally, a high level of trust in Uisce Eireann to supply a high quality resilient water supply into the future.

Customer Attitudes

- Trust Suggestions – better communications, customers stories, area specific, multiple channels.
- Customer Appetite for Information – majority of customers want more information.
- Text Messages – only 25% have signed up, 15% don't know it exists.
- Looking up Information – few have sought out information themselves.
- Customers assume UE will be proactive – multi channel, timely notifications, UE App.
- Honesty - Name the issue, say what they are doing about it.
- Responsive - Respond to customer contact.

2.2 Q & A

West of Ireland is different to the cities, local radio is really import in these areas and people will hear about issues via this method.

Call centres are a big issue – only speaking to someone who passes on the problem. Local representatives are required - AI could make communication worse.

Text Alerts – There is a community WhatsApp group that inform people. They have started to advertise the Text Messaging in the past year, so more people are signing up.

35% of people have had problems with UE – but some of issues are taste and odour. Taste, odour, colour are not big water quality issues, but it gives people a bad perception, this could be something for UE to look at.

Members felt it was good to hear views and attitudes towards on Water Conservation were becoming more positive and that UE advice was being taken on board. It was noted that some responses were still sceptical about water conservation.

		<p>Can relationships be found between customers on how they feel about communications from UE versus Local Authorities in the past.</p> <p>Members highlighted that there is missing data available on some water quality issues they feel are important, e.g. Nitrates, hardness etc. For e.g. - UE website only states the water is Nitrate compliant but doesn't give the concentrations of N, suggestion that the website should be more transparent with water quality data.</p> <p>18% of people don't know who to contact, should UE be focused on those who know who to contact or focus on getting knowledge to more people. 18% is relatively low number, so UE may focus elsewhere.</p> <p>The new Drinking Water Regs require utilities to show access to information. The information is on the website, but we need to advise UE to make it accessible.</p> <p>Lack of education, people need to know where water comes from. However, from a UE point of view, things are improving so why should they put more effort into education and communications.</p> <p>2.3 Discussion and Next Steps Action: Design research report, present to UE and develop policy advice on Interest of Public Consumers</p>
3.	Corporate issues	<p>3.1 Update on Forum expenditure to 30th November 2025 SEO explained that expenditure to 31st December 2025 was €688,533.07</p> <p>3.2 Update on Governance matters Forum Membership: Juan Pablo Martinez from Ibec has been appointed by the Minister as the Forum's Business Sector representative. Staff: Forum Administrator Martina Ryan has transferred to another section in Tipperary County Council. Beverly McGrath (Staff Officer) is the new Forum administrator. Forum Members acknowledged Martina's work over the past 6 years and her courtesy always when dealing with them and asked the SEO to thank her on their behalf and to wish her well in her new role. Invasive Alien species: Following advice to the Minister the DHLGH are currently in the process of setting up a meeting with the Forum and NPWS to discuss IAS management issues. AFU Strategic Plan: The SEO explained that the Chair & Secretariat were in the process of developing a brief to procure expertise to facilitate review of the current Forum Strategic Plan (2022-27) and assist strategic planning for 2027 – 2032. It is also proposed to establish a sub-group to steer process (5-6 people) similar to the last time.</p> <p><i>Strategic Plan - Members Views</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious of water quality in transitional waters, salmon and sea trout are struggling – need to push this area more. This is why there is value in doing this type of review, to get topics back on track. • Timing is important, need to develop and agree the brief so that a consultant can be procured. • Some groups are less structured (e.g. community and voluntary) and might take more time to get a wider point of view.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each member is representing their sector on the Forum and can share agreed information with their sectors and bring back any relevant issues to the Forum. • When can research or submissions become public knowledge to pass on to members sectors for them to distribute wider. It was suggested that a “Summary of meeting Outcomes” could be produced and disseminated soon after each plenary to include a list of documents that can be shared. This was agreed by the members.
4.	Research & Policy	<p>4.1 Approval of the Forum’s submission in response to public consultation by the CRU on Uisce Eireann’s Revenue Control 4 (RC4).</p> <p>Briefing on RC4 Consultation by CRU in mid-December and received expertise from Dr John Joyce to review the CRU proposals.</p> <p><i>Outcomes Based Approach:</i> Focus on output (infrastructure, treatment plants) but no focus on how this impacts the great/public good.</p> <p><i>Institutional Capacity:</i> RC4 is 63% bigger than RC3, UE have matured but have they matured significantly – benchmarking to see can UE deliver RC4. In report they are benchmarked against UK utilities not best in class.</p> <p><i>Domestic Metering:</i> CBA to identify security of supply, high water users etc. If CBA indicates metering is not a benefit, money should be reallocated to water demand projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum calls to introduce excess water use (fair water use policy). • New Connection Process – new connections should have meters. <p><i>Leakage:</i> Recommendation to not reduce the leakage targets but analyse what needs to be done to reach the targets.</p> <p><i>Security of Supply:</i> UE planned to defer to RC5, agree with CRU not to defer but need to look into the obstacles to gain further supports.</p> <p><i>Wastewater:</i> What will RC4 deliver for the WFD, call for more transparency and an outcomes base approach.</p> <p><i>Customer Service Metrics:</i> Metrics should reflect the wider interests, e.g. do the public trust UE more, understand their water supply, increase public knowledge. Continue to promote text message.</p> <p><i>Stakeholder Engagement:</i> Water Stakeholder Engagement Evaluation Panel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to know the intentions for this panel before we can give advice. • What is meant by stakeholder engagement, further information required. <p>Discussion Outcomes versus outputs is a really valuable point</p> <p><i>Domestic Meters:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UE need to upgrade their meters because they lose their accuracy after about 10 years.

- Member highlighted importance of meters for detecting leaks on customers property.
- UE can't tell someone they have a leak even if they know where the leak is due to GDPR.
- Member asked if there were regional statistics on meters.
- UE have new leakage targets under the Recast DW directive, suggest reference in final submission.

Action: Make reference to the leakage reduction requirements under the Recast Drinking Water Directive in the Section on Leakage.

Action: Make reference to the need for more information on whether the investment is predominantly for meters to be replaced or new meters to be installed. Recommended better communication of fixing leaks with communities.

Customer Communications/Public Perception:

- UE need better communications with the public to explain why they are working on streets; This would bring greater public acceptance.
- Reducing their leakage targets could be hugely negative for UE in the media and with the public.
- UE could run a campaign to inform people against running taps when there is freezing weather conditions.

Wastewater:

Policy is deliberate, UE hasn't got a role in environmental conservation.

Wastewater is having a huge impact on Dundalk Bay (not designated bathing water) – UE saying it's Storm Water, but it is not, public evidence is contrary to what they are saying, other members have had similar experiences

Action: Call for more ambition for meeting wastewater targets. Call for more transparent and accessible data on wastewater services.

Action: Make reference to the catchment community fora to support meaningful community engagement

Action: Draft submission approved by Plenary, minor adjustments to be made following discussion above, final submission will be circulated this week.

Water Services Update:

Water Service Act: Discussed Interest of Public Consumer's piece

Fieldtrip to UE Laboratory

Private Wells: Draft letter of advice to Minister

Water conservation: water efficient buildings – draft letter to minister

Catchment Management Update:

Coastal and Transitional Waters research to be presented at the upcoming CMSC meeting on the 29th January.

Proposed a coastal fieldtrip for the CMSC sub-committee

Informed members about the upcoming DHLGH SWMI consultation, closing date 19th June.

5.	Education & Communications	<p>5.1 Update on Communications & Education Actions</p> <p>Stripe Young Scientist: The pledge board and water quiz were popular with students and visitors.</p> <p>Water Award: Oisin Jackson won the water award for his project Turcast</p> <p>Conference Proposal: Water Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does water resilience mean for Ireland. <p>We want views from all the sectors, e.g. what can be done to manage demand, conserve water, climate change etc</p> <p>Ireland has the EU presidency this year, would be good to tie the conference into this.</p>
6.	Date for next Plenary	<p>6.1 To confirm the date of the next Plenary meeting</p> <p>Tuesday 10th March 2026 – Online via Zoom</p>