Draft Minutes of the Plenary Meeting
Tuesday 7th July 2026
Ashling Hotel

Attendees: Matt Crowe, David Wright, Martin McEnroe, Connie Rochford, Michael Kenny, Jean Rosney, Mark Farrelly, Puneeta Sreenivas, Charles Stanley-Smith, Dominic Cronin, Maria O'Gorman, Eamon Carroll, Marie Doyle

Apologies: Brendan O'Brien, Fintan Kelly, Ciarán Maguire, Karin Dubsky, Eimear Manning, Tadhg Buckley, Elaine McGoff, Keith Hyland, Steve Conlon, Suzanne Linnane, Constanze O'Toole, Juan Pablo Martinez

In Attendance: Donal Purcell, Triona McGrath, Divya Flynn, Aisling Corkery

No.	Item	Details
1.	**Apologies & Minutes**	**1.1 Welcome** Chair welcomed members to the meeting. **1.2 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest** No conflicts of interest. **1.3 Consideration of draft minutes of Meeting no. 75 held on 26th May 2026** Minutes Approved. **1.4 Matters arising from the minutes** None.
2.	**Corporate issues**	**2.1 To receive update on:** • **Forums expenditure to 30th June.** The SEO explained that expenditure to 30th June 2026 was *€334,767* • **Water Forum budget submission for 2027** Expenditure for 2027 is budgeted to increase by €30,162 to €833,088 with the predicted additional expenditure to cover salary increments, the regrading of administration post from January 2026 and a possible new national wage agreement. • **Memorandum of Funding agreement for 2026** • **SEO explained that it is a** Tripartite agreement between DHLGH, Water Forum and Tipperary Co. Council and was finalised in November 2025. It sets out the agreed activities to be funded for the period, how the programme of work is managed and a reporting and liaising framework for DHLGH governance. Governance structure has been put in place before the Periodic Critical Review • The MoFA was streamlined by DHLGH & updated with 2026 funding amounts. It was signed by the 3 organisations in June 2026. **2.2 Update from quarterly meeting with DHLGH** Required under the memorandum of funding to give the DHLGH and AFU a means of reporting and communicating on activities, including advice, consultation, updates and

		discussions. The Periodic Review by the Governance Department of the DHLGH is likely to take place Q4 2026 or Q1 2027. **2.3 Update on appointment of consultants to facilitate the review of the Forums current strategy & the development of the new strategy 2028-33.** The evaluation team (3 member and 2 AFU staff) evaluated responses from 3 Applicants based on the award criteria. The project was awarded to Kim Knowles t/a *The Change We Need* based on their extensive experience and excellent reference projects. A brief overview of the project team and an outline of the strategy facilitation process was given.
3.	**Research & Policy**	**3.1 Water Conservation** **3.1.1 Outcomes of the Water Conservation workshop** The Workshop was designed to support the development of a National Water Conservation Strategy and focused on identifying priorities. Key learnings from the workshop were discussed. The Workshop also identified short, medium and long term actions within the different themes. Discussed how the strategy could be delivered, who could be called to action for each of the priorities. Next Steps: Share and discuss report with National Water Conservation Working Group. National Water Conservation Working Group to develop advice to Minister on future water conservation strategy **Discussion/Q&A** • There is legislation coming in for Labelling for material that have been in contact with water, so water labels could be introduced in line with this. • Economic consequences of not saving water could have employment risks • Cost efficiency is critical in the non-domestic side for money saving purposes – feedback from UE is that itis cheaper for some businesses to continue with leaks rather than pay to fix them. • Look at NFGWS for demand reduction benchmarking for non-domestic supply. • There is a gap in water conservation for large private abstractions. • Need cross political support for smart metering. • Smart metering can be difficult in more rural areas where signal may not be strong enough. • Need to consider the WFD and the effect not conserving water will have on the environment in the context of abstraction. Q: Who could lead the Education Forum side of things? A decision needs to be made on who best to coordinate this – An Taisce could be a great leader for this, H2O Heros could also support education. **3.1.2 Agree the updated Forum position on water conservation** **Next Steps** • Discussed momentum of the Forum's previous position on water conservation, the recommendations that were taken onboard and those outstanding. • Discussed Forum recommendations coming from the workshop which should be prioritised in terms of education, leakage, water efficient buildings, EU water labelling and Non-domestic use/private abstractions. **Discussion**

		• There could be a role for the CCF for engagement on water efficiency within local areas.
		• Education strategy and communication strategy are completely different so both need to be considered.
		• Stewardship, conservation and efficiency all depend on data, we need to establish baseline figures.
		• National Emergency agency should have colour coded drought messaging (could be into drought management plans)
		• Civil engineers and architects need to be educated on water efficiency via their degrees, similarly plumbers need to be trained via apprenticeships.
		
		Research Lead: Data centres and their water use are getting a lot of attention in the media recently following water conservation messaging. There is a concern that the lack of understanding or transparency on water use would negatively impact public trust. Should the Forum have a position on Data Centres data centres need to be identified on the abstractions licenses and have a designated category.
		Next steps: Carry out some internal research and consider a Forum position.
		
		3.3 **To discuss and agree the AFU submission to Uisce Eireann in response to consultation on the Bioresources**
		
		UE's draft National Bioresources Strategy outlines their 25 year strategy for nationwide approach to sustainable bioresources management.
		
		Recommendations by the Forum include:
		
		• Key legislation list in the strategy should include the WFD as overarching legislation, every stage should be assessed against WFD
		• Alternative reuse and recovery options should be prioritised for dealing with sewage sludge and biosolids during Autumn in line with recommendations in the NAP for nutrient sensitive areas.
		• Drinking water source protection should be included and aligned with the requirements of the WFD for drinking water source protection.
		  o Alternative reuse and recovery pathways should be prioritised in environmentally sensitive drinking water source catchments
		  o Enhanced monitoring for DW source catchment
		• Bioresources monitoring and reporting should detail:
		  o National monitoring requirements
		  o Compliance trends should be published and publicly available
		  o Independent sampling/audits
		  o Contractor training for biosolid reuse on land
		• Risk management for accidental spillage or leakage to waterbodies during transportation or storage
		
		Discussion
		Q: Where can biosolids be spread on land?
		A: predominantly on tillage (cannot be spread on land used for dairy or beef). Struvite can't be used on food production due to struvite containing heavy metals etc. Also, the movement of nutrients recorded under agriculture is expanding to include sewage products.
		• Include drinking water directive into legislation piece
		• Clear timelines for completion and implementation of research on alternative reuse.

		• Change to "independent audit" to "consider quality assurance" of sampling the quality of the biosolids. (check if included in EPA monitoring at WWTP). • Clarify that independent monitoring of industry effluent by UE is to ensure contaminant levels are compliant for sludge. • Include climate risk within the transport and storage risk assessment. Next steps: Draft submission approved by members, following minor edits agreed today. Final submission will be sent to UE as part of consultation. ***3.4*** **Research & Policy Update** • AFU SWMI submission has been submitted to the DHLGH. • Both research projects have been awarded and are underway.
5.	**Education & Communications**	**4.1 To discuss AFU Water Resilience Conference for November 2026** Save the date: Thursday 12th November Based on objectives of the EU Water Resilience Strategy – restoring and protecting the water cycle, building a water smart economy and ensuring access to clean and affordable water for all. Currently scoping the agenda and speakers for the conference. • Member suggested that consideration should be given to participation during the conference. **4.2 Update including report on EPA water conference** Discussed members attendance at the EPA water conference, The Water Forum's presentation, exhibition stand and gave key updates from the conference (e.g. EPA Water Quality in Ireland Report 2025 and LAWPROs transitions to the River Basin Management Services).
7.	**AOB**	A member suggested that Prof Fiona Regan (DCU) could be good for the water resilience conference and recommended to members to watch the two RTE radio 1 Countrywide shows where she was interviewed by Philip Boucher-Hayes. A member suggested that when the EPA issue licenses for discharges the monitoring systems could be paid for as part of the licenses. • The SEO explained that the process for identifying and nominating the individuals representing the interests of Uisce Eireann domestic customers on the Forum is to be discussed with the DHLGH so that the approach can be agreed. • An Comisún Pleanála have given another year for the WSP decision.
8.	**Date for next Plenary**	**6.1 To confirm the date of the next Plenary meeting** Tuesday 8th September 2026 – Ashling Hotel