

## MINUTES OF PUBLIC WATER FORUM MEETING NO. 5

**DATE:** 27<sup>TH</sup> September 2016  
**TIME :** 11:00 – 16:00  
**LOCATION :** The Ashling Hotel, Dublin

### **PRESENT:**

Dr Tom Collins (Chair)

Aoife Doyle (CER), Berenice Phelan, Colm Brady, Connie Rochford, David Wright, Eoghan Brophy, Joe Tuohy, Keith Hyland, Kevin Ryan, Liam Berney, Liam Tobin, Michael Brophy, Mindy O'Brien, Neil Walker, Orla O'Donovan, Patrick Gerry McGuinness, Paul McMenamin, Rena O'Herlihy, Suzanne Linnane, Vincent Holmes

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr. Kevin Duffy, Expert Water Commission, Chairman

### **APOLOGIES:**

Andrea Ahern, Dympna Morrow, Fergus O'Toole, James Grimes, Jean O'Dwyer, John Shine, Karen Carney, Laurie Kearon, Michael Spellman, Philip Treacy, Susan O'Keffe, Tim Fenn, William O'Neill

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
1.1	Apologies The Chair noted apologies.	<b>NOTED</b>
1.2	Member Update A member update was requested to be added to the agenda for meeting no 6 to outline the lessons learned through the first year of the Forum.	<b>NOTED</b>
1.3	Introduction & Approval of Minutes from Meeting No. 4 The minutes from Meeting No. 4, 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2016 were approved without edit.	<b>APPROVED</b>
2.1	Update on PWF Website	<b>NOTED</b>
2.2	Update on PWF Budget	<b>NOTED</b>

**2.3** Upcoming Consultations – CER Consultation on Irish Water Revenue for the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018  
The Chair sought volunteers to draft a response form the Forum for this consultation. Neil Walker will draft the response for the members to review and approve.

**3.0** Expert Water Commission Presentation  
Mr Kevin Duffy, Chair of the Expert Water Commission attended the Forum to meet with the members. Mr Duffy facilitated a questions and answers session with the members in advance of a formal presentation to the Commission. Mr Duffy outlined the Terms Of Reference for the Commission. The work and review is to be presented by the Commission to the Oireachtas by the end of November 2017. Mr Duffy clarified that he understood the value of listening and was keen to hear the diverse views from the members.

The Q&A session commenced with a focus on the affordability of water charges and the negative impact on the more vulnerable in society. The members made various arguments to support their points of view, indicating that water should not be a utility and a free allowance should cover the majority of usage in a socially equitable manner. In relation to allowances, Mr Duffy queried whether water poverty will become a social issue in the same regard as fuel poverty as a result of allowances?

Investment in infrastructure was agreed upon as a necessity to improve water quality, consistency and sustainability. The majority of members were in agreement that there is a valid rationale for one national organisation to oversee this element of water charges. However, the members indicated a general concern that such an organisation be retained in state ownership, which changes the business model substantially. The criticisms of Irish Water were outlined to include; poor communication, lack of engagement with the public, lack of understanding of the vulnerable in our society, the operating costs, salaries and consultant charges incurred. Sustainability via rain harvesting and other innovations should be explored and included where feasible and possible with infrastructure improvements.

The topics of source protection measures and polluter pays principle were raised by various members. Mr Duffy agreed that measures were needed going forward for investment in infrastructure. Source protection and river basin management was a reoccurring theme raised by many members and as an alternative payment mechanism via a water levy.

Colm Brady, group scheme representative, informed us that with a volumetric charge the majority of their members saw a reduction in the bills received. It made members aware of behaviour and conservation was implemented by osmosis.

The EU Directives that Ireland are bound by were discussed and the impact of the fines received on the exchequer. Neil Walker, Industry Representative, outlined that in Europe there was more incentive to not to pollute and protect source and reduce treatment costs. The idea is to incentivise good behaviour, for the greater good financially and environmentally.

Mr Duffy concluded the session by complimenting the members for volunteering to be part of the Forum, their input and the range of views that they discussed and raised.

The Chair thanked Mr Duffy for his time.

<b>6.0</b>	2017 Meeting Dates for Approval Outline without comment	<b>APPROVED</b>
<b>7.0</b>	2017 Budget and Workplan	<b>DEFERRED</b>
<b>8.0</b>	Rainwater Harvesting Deferred to meeting no 6	<b>DEFERRED</b>
<b>9.0</b>	Working Group Update Deferred to meeting no 6	<b>DEFERRED</b>
<b>10.00</b>	A.O.B No new items were added.	

**Date of Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of the Public Water Forum will be held on Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016.

Minutes approved:



Chairperson

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016

Date