

## Minutes of the meeting of the Water Advisory Body meeting with Irish Water

Thursday 11 June 2020 10.30am

Venue: Online meeting via WebEx Video Conferencing

Attended by:

Chairperson Paul McGowan

Members Miriam McDonald Michelle Minihan

Martin Sisk Tom Collins

Secretariat John McCarthy Neill Dalton

Colin Flood Darren Browne

By Invite: Niall Gleeson – Irish Water Eamon Gallen – Irish Water

Chris McCarthy – Irish Water Brian Sheehan – Irish Water

Margaret Attridge – Irish Water Florence White - Ervia

### **1. Introduction**

The representatives of Irish Water were welcomed to the meeting by the WAB Chairperson. Irish Water were invited by the WAB to provide an overall update with an emphasis on Covid-19 and the impacts on its Business Plan and Strategic Funding Plan delivery, including Operations, Regulatory Compliance, Capex Programme and Revenue/Finance.

### **2. Presentation by Irish Water (by PowerPoint)**

Irish Water discussed its financial outlook for 2020 pre-Covid-19 in light of the Revenue Control Period 3 Draft decision, reduced Exchequer funding, the 2020 General Election, charges and potential weather related events.

With the onset of Covid-19, Irish Water discussed its response. This included the mobilization of its Crisis Management Team and discussions with key stakeholders. Business Continuity Plans were put in place to safeguard operations, safeguard staff, maintain critical assets and stockpile essential supplies such as PPE, chemicals and bottled water. Mobile working was implemented where possible. Some essential capital projects continued through the lockdown.

Irish Water also discussed the further challenges that the drought has presented. They discussed improved response capability following the 2018 drought. They also discussed the response of the Drought Management Team, meetings with key stakeholders, tankering and alternative supplies and the National Water Conservation Campaign and subsequent order. Irish Water discussed the importance of leakage reduction as a long-term approach to supply/demand balance. Communication efforts are ongoing via national press, radio, digital, TV and stakeholder mediums. These will continue throughout the summer.

With the events of Covid-19 and this year's drought, Irish Water discussed the impacts and implications on its Strategic Funding Plan. The delayed Water Conservation charge, increases in domestic usage and the reduction in collection of non-domestic revenue, funding inflexibility and the possibility of contractor claims will have implications. This may result in the delaying of capital projects into 2020 and beyond. The COVID-19 impact on the Exchequer may also impact the Government's ability to fund its Capex programme.

Irish Water discussed the implications of COVID-19 for Operations and Compliance. These include the implementation of social distancing, resulting in restricted site visits for regulators and increased difficulty in responding to emergencies due to additional safety protocols.

The Chairperson and WAB members thanked Irish Water for their presentation.

### **3. Questions/Discussion on Irish Water presentation to the WAB**

The following questions were asked by the WAB members.

- i. Has a potential second wave of the COVID virus been factored into future expenditure?*

Irish Water have not prepared for a second wave but are revising their Strategic Funding Plan in Q3, and will be factoring in a second wave and the current drought to the figures.

**ii. *Is there a better way to get water to users rather than tankering?***

Irish Water wanted to avoid the need for people to queue for tankers in areas of housing due to the requirement for physical distancing. They acknowledged the expenditure involved and is looking to alternatives.

**iii. *How extensive are meters being used in relation to leakage?***

Meters have been used extensively and have been invaluable.

**iv. *Was the possibility of drought planned for?***

Irish Water stated that they always factor the risk of drought into their planning and budgeting process. This was somewhat overtaken/eroded due to the Covid-19 crisis.

**v. *How does this drought compare to 2018?***

In 2018, the drought started later that year following a warm Spring which provided a more difficult/harder starting point in terms of response.

Irish Water will provide a final version of the presentation to the WAB for publication on the WAB website.

**The meeting was brought to a close.**

<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1.	Irish Water will review their presentation and provided a revised version for publication on the WAB website.	Secretariat to follow up.
2.	Irish Water will revise their Strategic Funding Plan in Q3, and will factor in a second COVID-19 wave and the current drought.	