

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

Friday 4 September 2020 10:30am

Venue: Online meeting via WebEx Video Conferencing

Attended by:

Chairperson Paul McGowan

Members Miriam McDonald Michelle Minihan
Martin Sisk

Secretariat John McCarthy Neill Dalton
Darren Browne

By Invite: Niall Gleeson Eamon Gallen
Chris McCarthy Tom Cuddy
Florence White Declan Morrissey

Apologies: Tom Collins

1. Introduction

The representatives of Irish Water were welcomed to the meeting by the WAB Chairperson.

2. Irish Water Presentation

Irish Water presented to the WAB members on the following topics:

- Overall Progress and Update
- Update on the revision of the Strategic Funding Plan (SFP)
- Operational Review 2020:
 - COVID-19 impact including Wave 2
 - Additional challenges from Drought, Storm Ellen, Storm Francis
- Update on Procurement Review

3. Questions / Discussion on Irish Water Presentation to the WAB

The Chair opened the meeting to any queries the WAB members have.

The WAB enquired what Irish Water is doing differently for now and into the future in its planning for unforeseen events. Irish Water confirmed day-to-day operations have been impacted by COVID, specifically around social distancing in the workplace. Working from home arrangements have proved productive. Irish Water is in regular contact with the LGMA. It has adapted its response to lockdowns imposed nationally or at a local level and repurposed permits to undertake essential work. Irish Water noted its funding plan has had to adapt to the challenges posed by COVID and it has successfully managed its supply chain during this time. Irish Water expects new tenders for services will now contain measures for contingency plans for COVID-19. It expects delays in capital projects and will prioritise works and engage with the CRU in relation to those delays.

The WAB asked if Irish Water has a specific plan in place for a national second wave of COVID-19 and if a Dublin City was subject to its own lockdown. Irish Water confirmed it does and has planned down to plant level for dealing with a second wave. Through careful stocking of spares and chemicals it has managed its supply chain although noted this will lead to higher carrying costs. Irish Water is designated as a critical organization and provider of an essential service, so staff can continue to travel during any lockdown.

The WAB noted the importance of the Ringsend plant and asked what the impact of COVID-19 has and will be on it. Irish Water confirmed day-to-day operations have been modified due to social distancing requirements but overall it was working effectively. Irish Water noted its concern around the impact on constructions projects underway at the plant. It also confirmed that some of the workforce share accommodation, travel to work together and congregate together. Irish Water is exploring ways it can help with social distancing under these circumstances. It expects delays of 6 months on certain projects at the plant.

The WAB enquired as to when the full impact of COVID-19 will be realised. Irish Water commented it has a good understanding of the delays around certain projects but it is too early to say what the total impact of the pandemic will be.

The WAB commented on the good work of Irish Water around specific issues it dealt with it over the last few months and highlighted examples of good outcomes in Vartry following an algal bloom in Spring months, repairs to a burst main delivering water from Leixlip water treatment plant and the swift action taken to impose a “do not consume” notice on Achill Island during August, as well as ensuring water supplies for sanitation purposes were maintained to consumers and a large number of holidaymakers visiting the island at the time. The WAB asked if Irish Water has observed a spike in demand in Dublin since the return of schools. Irish Water noted it is too early to say but stated that during the drought period of early summer, Greater Dublin Area demand peaked at approximately 600 mega litres a day and this stabilised at circa 550 mega litres. Recent Works completed at Leixlip provided additional capacity

The Chair thanked Irish Water for its comprehensive presentation and answering queries it had.

4. Any Other Business

None.

The meeting was brought to a close.