



## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Water Advisory Body**

**Monday 12 April 2021, 10:30am**

Venue: Remote Meeting via WebEx Video Conferencing

Attended by:

Chairperson Paul McGowan

Members Miriam McDonald Michelle Minihan

Martin Sisk Dónal Purcell

Secretariat John McCarthy Neill Dalton

Colin Flood Darren Browne

### **1. Minutes of previous meetings**

The Board agreed the minutes of the last meeting of the WAB on 18 March 2021.

The draft minutes of the meeting with Ernst and Young and Irish Water from 17 February 2021 have been circulated to them for comment and the Secretariat are awaiting a reply. A further deadline will be issued for reply.

The minutes of the meeting with Minister O'Brien from 4 March were approved subject to a minor amendment. These have been marked 'deliberative' and will be issued to the Minister's office for comment and approval. Following this, they will be published on the WAB website.

## **2. Declaration of any conflict of interest**

There was no declaration of any conflict of interest.

## **3. Annual Report**

A draft Annual Report 2020 has been circulated to the Board. Miriam McDonald has already provided comments on the draft report and will circulate these to the full Board. The deadline for further comments is the week ending 16 April. Once these have been received the draft report will go through a final review reading by the Secretariat.

## **4. Progress for Report 1 of 2021**

A desktop published version of the report has been circulated to the Board ahead of today's meeting. The report will take the form of a main report and an additional Appendix covering KPI description text and their technical notes. A Microsoft Word version will also be circulated to the Board and made available on the WAB SharePoint by the Secretariat. The Chairperson and Michelle Minihan have reviewed the report. Martin Sisk, Dónal Purcell and Miriam McDonald will review the draft report and provide the comments by 13 April. It was agreed to release the report ahead of the Water Ireland Conference on 22/23 April. Ahead of its release, it was agreed that the report will be circulated to the Minister's office.

A PR company has been arranged to promote the release of the report. The PR message will be based on the Executive Summary with a focus on the finalisation of Revenue Control and the recommendations of the Scottish Water International report. The Secretariat will prepare an accompanying short summary animation video covering key information. This will be shared on Twitter following the report's release. The Secretariat will liaise with the Department's communication team to publicise the report's release via its Twitter account. The CRU and EPA will also publicise the report via their social media accounts.

## **5. Consider for Report No.2 of 2021.**

The reception of the new format for Quarterly Report No.1, 2021 will be reviewed with Report No.2 likely to follow the same format. The end of May was agreed as the data cut-off date for Quarterly report No.2, 2021, with a June release of the report. Michelle Minihan will revert to the Secretariat regarding updates to the Wastewater metrics. The Board agreed to comment on the following topics in Part 3 of the report:

- First Fix Scheme;
- the Single Public Utility Paper;
- The Performance Assessment Framework. This is dependent on the Framework's publication date; and
- Stage 1 of review of Irish Water Procurement procedures (as per Agenda Item 6 below).

Furthermore, the report will acknowledge the release of the National Water Resources Plan and mention that the WAB is currently planning a Customer Survey. Comment on the Single Public Utility Paper may take the form of advice to the Minister.

It was noted that the EPA's Drinking Water Report may feature in Quarterly Report No.3 of 2021.

## **6. Progress review of Irish Water procurement procedures**

Following a meeting with Ernst and Young and Irish Water in February, the Secretariat have requested a finalised version of the procurement report. Irish Water will issue the WAB a cover note as to their response and actions to the recommendations made in the report. Irish Water will also provide their comments on the meeting minutes from 17 February 2021. It is the intention of the WAB to publish these documents on the WAB website. Following this, further commentary will take place in Quarterly Report No.2 of 2021.

Further discussion of Stage 2 of the report is required in light of the recommendations of the Scottish Water International report and Irish Water's proposal in response to those recommendations.

## **7. Discuss topics covered at the meeting with the Minister on 4 March 2021**

Following a meeting with the Minister on 4 March, the Members agreed to further discuss the topics and issues that arose from that meeting.. These included boiled water notices, leakage reduction, lead pipe replacement and the National Water Resources Plan. The Members discussed the role of the WAB in communicating its findings to the Minister and the subsequent actions and outcomes of these findings. The Members agreed that it was the role of the WAB to provide a fair and balanced account of Irish Water's performance. The Members maintained that reporting should remain at a high level and not become regional or local. The Members acknowledged the ongoing need to have the reports as accessible as possible as part of an ongoing developing communications strategy.

The Members agreed that the agenda for future meetings with the Minister would be based on the most recent Quarterly report. The Secretariat will forward March meeting minutes to the Minister's office for approval before publication on the WAB website.

## **8. Irish Water Customer Survey**

The Members agreed that the survey will be general and high level in nature. The scope will likely focus on topics of consumer engagement and customer contact. Furthermore, it was suggested that questions could be based on Quarterly Report KPIs given this is an area the WAB is already examining. The survey will take a national approach rather than a regional approach with both domestic and non-domestic customers considered. The use of qualitative along with quantitative data will be further explored with the eventual market research company. The Board agreed to begin procurement of a market research company in parallel to establishing a scope of the survey. Miriam McDonald agreed to be part of a survey working group. It was agreed to invite Irish Water to a WAB meeting to discuss their experience of customer surveys.

## **9. Data Hub Development**

The Secretariat have met representatives of the CRU to discuss the Data Hub project. They will provide the raw data for the Department's Statistical Unit that will be part of a data

hub. Following this, the Secretariat will meet with representatives of the EPA to discuss what data might be available.

## **10. Communications**

### *Joint Oireachtas Committee*

The Secretariat have issued a letter to Stephen Matthews, Chairman of the Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and invited him to a future WAB meeting where he will be briefed on the work of the WAB. The Secretariat will follow up on this email following the release of Quarterly Report No.1 of 2021.

### *Social Media:*

The Secretariat provided a draft layout for a proposed WAB Twitter account. The account will be primarily used to share publications by the WAB. The comments feature will be disabled with contacts directed to the WAB email.. The Board approved the Twitter account layout. Going forward the Secretariat will prepare a draft social media usage policy.

## **11. Confirm next three meeting dates**

Forthcoming meeting dates are:

- 18 May at 2pm
- 15 June at 2pm
- 14 July at 2pm

## **12. Any Other Business**

The Board expressed their thanks and appreciation for the work and efforts of departing Secretariat member John McCarthy.

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

<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1.	Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main Minutes (18 March) – Board approved</li> <li>• EY/WAB Minutes (18 March) – Issue Irish Water with a deadline for reply</li> <li>• Minister Minutes (4 March) – Approved subject to minor amendments. Issue to Ministers office for approval.</li> </ul>
3.	WAB Annual Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deadline for Members comments – week ending 16 April.</li> <li>• Miriam McDonald to circulate comments to full board.</li> </ul>
4.	Progress for Qtr Report 1 of 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microsoft Word version to be circulated and added to SharePoint by Secretariat.</li> <li>• Member comments to be received by 13 April.</li> <li>• PR message to be based on Executive Summary with focus on finalisation of revenue control and SWI recommendations.</li> <li>• Issue to Minister a few days before release and before the Water Ireland Conference on 22/23 April</li> <li>• Animated video to be part of Tweet issued.</li> <li>• The Secretariat will enquire with the Departments communication team to tweet report.</li> <li>• The CRU and EPA will also publicise the report via their own social media accounts.</li> </ul>

5	Consider Report 2 of 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data cut-off date for the end of May.</li> <li>• June release</li> <li>• Include topics of First Fix Scheme, Performance Assessment Framework (dependent on publication date), Single Public Utility Paper and Irish Water Stage 1 Procurement Report</li> <li>• Acknowledge National Water Resources Plan</li> <li>• Mention that WAB is planning a Customer Survey.</li> <li>• Drinking Water report possibly for Quarterly Report 3.</li> </ul>
7.	Minister Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forward minutes to Ministers office for approval.</li> <li>• Future meeting agenda should relate to the most recent Quarterly report.</li> </ul>
8.	IW Customer Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement of a market research company to begin parallel to establishing scope of survey.</li> <li>• Scope to include consumer engagement, customer contact and based on report KPIs.</li> <li>• National rather than regional with both domestic and non-domestic customers considered.</li> <li>• Miriam McDonald agreed to be part of a survey working group.</li> <li>• Irish Water to be invited to WAB meeting to discuss their experience of customer surveys.</li> </ul>

9.	Data Hub development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRU to return with raw data. Secretariat to meet with EPA.</li> </ul>
10.	Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved of Twitter account layout.</li> <li>• Draft social media policy to prepared</li> </ul>
10.	JOC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-contact JOC Chair office regarding invite following Quarterly Report 1 release.</li> </ul>
11.	Meeting Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed new meeting date of 14 July 2021 at 2pm</li> </ul>