

The 9th meeting of the 6th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Friday 20 March 2015, in EPA Headquarters, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co Wexford.

Members Present: Laura Burke (Chair); Elizabeth Delahunty; John Sheahan; David Ball; Elaine Nevin; John Cuddihy; Pat Farrell; Áine Ryall; Deirdre Lyons.

In attendance: Dara Lynott; Gerard O’Leary & Teresa Roche.

Apology: Sharon McGuinness; Martin Hogan; Colin O’Dowd.

Secretary: Tom O Reilly

1. **Introductions**

The Chairperson welcomed the Advisory Committee to Wexford for their 9th meeting.

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 11 December 2014**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 December 2014 were approved.

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

The adoption of the Agenda was approved.

4. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

5. **Emerging Issues**

Laura Burke advised the Committee that the Agency is working towards its 2015 ECF allocation of 353 for the merged EPA organisation. Although there has been a Government announcement that the constraints of the Employment Control Framework have been removed, clarification will be sought from the Department regarding the implications of this announcement. It was noted that sanction for certain posts was still required and that the Agency is currently recruiting to fill consequential posts following the recent recruitment process. Laura informed the Committee that the Agency’s Work Force Plan for 2015 was recently submitted to the Department of Environment. Laura Burke advised the Committee that confirmation of the EPA’s 2015 Budget has not yet been received and advised the Committee of the difficulties arising as a consequence. The Committee were informed that a Review of the Merger has been completed by the Merger Working Group and that a final Report will be submitted to the Department and then onto the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Additionally, the Committee were informed that there are a number of on-going Cross Office Projects looking at integration within the Organisation. The Committee noted that a new Statement of Strategy for the Organisation was being developed and the Committee would receive a presentation on the progress of this work at their next meeting in June. Laura informed the Committee that the European Environmental Agency recently published its State of the Environment Report and Laura recently had a meeting with Frans Timmermans the new Vice-President for Better Regulation in the European Commission. Finally, the Chairperson briefly outlined upcoming reports being published and events being organised by the EPA.

6. **Education and Sustainability**

(i) Presentation on Education for Sustainability

Elaine Nevin, National Director of ECO-UNESCO and a member of the Advisory Committee, gave an overview of the work carried out by ECO-UNESCO in the area of Education for Sustainability. The presentation detailed information on the following items:

- Brief History of Education for Sustainable Development;
- World Environmental Educations Congress 7;
- Key findings of the UN Education for Sustainable Development End of Decade Report;
- Development & objectives of the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development;
- Highlights of the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development.

(ii) Discussion

Laura Burke thanked Elaine for her presentation, which highlighted the progress on Education for Sustainability and advised that the Agency promotes good environmental practices through its schools programmes and Eco Eye, but that this is an aspect which should be further explored. One Committee member highlighted how Farming is becoming more sustainable and that Eco Eye could feature this in the future. Another member pointed out that 97% of water is underground and that people need to be educated to manage and utilise this valuable resource efficiently. It was agreed that the EPA will incorporate Education for Sustainable Development into its next State of the Environment Report.

7. **EPA Enforcement Activities**

Gerard O'Leary Director of the Office of Environmental Enforcement gave an overview of the EPA's Enforcement Activities. The presentation detailed information on the following items:

- Compliance and Enforcement Overview;
- Licensing, Enforcement, Monitoring and Assessment (LEMA);
- 2014 Enforcement Activity;
- Drinking Water Enforcement;
- Waste Water Enforcement;
- Prosecutions.

(ii) Discussion

There was detailed discussion by the Committee following the presentation on EPA Enforcement Activities. One Committee member asked if any Local Authorities had been prosecuted. Gerard informed the Committee that the Agency has prosecuted Local Authorities. Another member pointed out that 50% of domestic waste water treatment systems failed their first inspection and that this was reported in the media as creating water pollution. Gerard responded by informing the Committee that following the simple process of desludging of the septic tank, the pass rate increased to 80% after the second inspection. A Committee member suggested that the EPA should publish compliance reports highlight good and bad sectors. Although this does happen, it was agreed to look at this suggestion further.

8. **Role of the Advisory Committee and Section 28 of the EPA Act**

Following a brief discussion the following was agreed;

- That a presentation be given to the Committee in quarter 4 from each offices on their proposed Work Programme for 2016.
- Include recommendations in the minutes as agreed by the Committee.
- The Committee would consider drawing up actions and issues to be included in a letter to the Minister.
- That brief CV's of each Committee Member would be published on the EPA's webpage.

9.

Any Other Business

(i) Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Thursday, 18th June 2015 at the Galway Bay Hotel.

(ii) Topics for discussion

The Topics to be discussed at the next meeting are as follows;

- Draft EPA Strategy
- Communications Presentation
- Report of the Advisory Committee

This concluded the business of the meeting.