

The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the 6<sup>th</sup> EPA Advisory Committee was held on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2013, at EPA Headquarters, Johnstown Castle Estate, Wexford.

Members Present: Laura Burke (Chair); Elaine Nevin; Elizabeth Delahunty; Martin Hogan; Áine Ryall; Pat Farrell; Colin O'Dowd (via video conference); John Cuddihy; John Sheahan.

In attendance: Dara Lynott; Gerard O'Leary; Micheál Lehané; Jim Hurley.

Apology: David Ball; Deirdre Lyons; Sharon McGuinness

Secretary: Tom O'Reilly

The Chairperson, Laura Burke, Director General of the EPA, welcomed the Members to the first meeting of the 6<sup>th</sup> EPA Advisory Committee. She said she was delighted to have such a wide representation on the Committee and was looking forward to their constructive contribution to the work of the Agency during their term of office. She highlighted the importance of the work of the EPA in protecting and improving Ireland's Environment.

1. **Introductions**

The Chairperson invited each Committee Member to give a brief biographical introduction.

2. **Approval of the Agenda**

The adoption of the Agenda was approved.

3. **Presentation on the Operation of the EPA**

The Chairperson gave an overview of the functions and activities of the EPA, including the structure, mission, functions and budget. She charted the development of the EPA since its establishment in 1993 and highlighted the organisational, economic and environmental challenges that the Agency is now facing. There was detailed discussion on the independence, transparency and accountability of the EPA, particularly relating to licensing and enforcement issues, and the merger of the EPA and RPII into one organisation. Further to discussions, various topics of interest to the members of the Committee were identified including; Environmental Impact Assessments, Communications, Licensing, Enforcement, the National Waste Prevention Programme, and the Food Harvest Strategy. It was decided that presentations on particular topics will be made by appropriate staff of the EPA to future meetings of the Advisory Committees to clarify and expand on issues raised at the meeting.

4. **Functions & Responsibilities of the EPA Advisory Committee**

The following documentation was circulated to Members:

➤ *Note on the Functions of the Advisory Committee*

The Chairperson explained that the Advisory Committee has a wide role and can make recommendations to the EPA, or to the Minister for the Environment,

concerning the functions and activities of the Agency, as set out in Section 28 of the EPA Act 1992.

➤ *Information on Declaration of Interests*

The Chairperson drew the Members' attention to the requirements under the EPA Act relating to Declaration of Interests and asked every member to ensure they signed the declaration and returned it to Tom O'Reilly.

➤ *Note on Confidentiality* prepared for the guidance of Members

The Chairperson stated that the EPA is an open, transparent organisation and is covered by the terms of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 1997 and the Access to Information on Environment Regulations, 1993. However, within the workings of the Committee, it is essential that any discussions by the Members at their meetings to be confidential should be treated as such.

➤ *Standing Orders*

The Standing Orders for Meetings of the Advisory Committee were noted.

6. **Overview of EPA Work Programmes 2013**

➤ *Office of Climate, Licensing, Research & Resource Use (OCLRR)*

Mr Dara Lynott, Director, OCLRR, gave a detailed overview of the work of the Office of Climate, Licensing, Research & Resource Use including information on the wide range of activities/projects undertaken by each of the units of the Office.

➤ *Office of Environmental Enforcement (OEE)*

Mr Gerard O'Leary, Director, OEE, gave a detailed presentation on the Office of Environmental Enforcement to the Committee. He detailed the development of the OEE since its establishment in 2003 and information on the structure, areas of responsibility and the challenges for the Office.

➤ *Office of Communications & Corporate Services (OCCS)*

Mr Jim Hurley, Programme Manager, OCCS, gave a detailed presentation on the Office of Communications & Corporate Services to the Committee. He detailed information on the structure and range of responsibilities for each of the units of the Office.

➤ *Office of Environmental Assessment (OEA)*

Mr Micheál Lehane, Programme Manager, OEA, gave a detailed presentation on the Office of Environmental Assessment to the Committee. He detailed information on the wide range of activities/projects undertaken by each of the units of the Office.

It was noted that a copy of the presentations will be circulated to the Committee.

7. **Proposals for Induction Seminar for the EPA Advisory Committee**

The Members discussed the development of a Work Programme for the Advisory Committee. It was noted that previous Committees had considered a wide range of topics, including the strategic review process, waste management, licensing and enforcement issues, air and water quality, emissions trading, climate change, research, resources and quality customer service. The Chairperson outlined the

recommendation by the previous Committee for an intensive induction session for future Advisory Committees. Following discussion, the Committee unanimously decided that an induction seminar was not required and they decided to commence work immediately with the main Agenda item being *Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)* and *Communications* at the next meeting.

8. **Future Meeting Dates/Agenda**

The Members noted that the Advisory Committee meets quarterly and it was agreed to set the dates of the next three meetings as follows:

- ***Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2013 – Dublin***
- ***Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013 - TBA***
- ***Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013 - TBA***

The Chairperson informed the Committee that the Agenda and documentation for all subsequent meetings will be posted onto a private Extranet/Filesshare website, and this should be used by the committee to view and download all meeting documentation. Usernames and Passwords to access the site will be distributed to each member in due course.

9. **Any Other Business**

The Chairperson thanked the Members of the Committee for their attendance at the meeting and their contributions to the discussion. She invited them to submit items for consideration at future meetings and for the development of a Work Programme for the Advisory Committee.

This concluded the business of the meeting.