

# **Environmental Protection Agency**

## **Croke Park Agreement**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Progress Report- April 2011 to March 2012**

#### **Section 4 - Productivity**

Throughout the year under review, the EPA continued to make adaptive changes and to implement more efficient ways of working as the most effective means of delivering on its statutory obligations with reduced staffing and financial resources. These actions have delivered significant productivity allowing the EPA not only to maintain existing services but to take on new functions also without additional resources.

Overall, the EPA had a reduction of eleven staff during the year. In addition, the equivalent of approximately twenty staff were absent fulltime throughout the year due to statutory leave e.g. maternity leave, parental leave. Through a process of reassignments, work reorganisation, prioritisation and adaptive leadership, the work previously undertaken by those staff was absorbed without any significant diminution in services delivered. EPA staff continue to be open to improved ways of working and delivering work efficiencies where possible.

Specific examples of productivity achievements in the past year are set out below.

- Administrative Staff in the Environmental Licensing Programme were upskilled to take on responsibility for completing transfer applications from Licensees. This work had previously been carried out by Technical Staff (Inspectors) who are now focussed on more technical licence assessment work.
- Environmental Objectives Regulations Reviews- Technical Amendments associated with this project are now being completed by Administrative Staff rather than Inspectors thus achieving greater efficiencies for the Environmental Licensing Programme.
- Work processes related to applications from local authorities (462 issued to date) for waste water discharge certificates of authorisation were streamlined thereby reducing the work involved and reducing the cost to Local Authorities.
- EPA's technology change programme focussed on improving productivity and self-sufficiency in IT. Examples include the implementation of Microsoft Office 2010 and training staff in optimising functionality; the extended use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software; implementation of IT Infrastructure monitoring and software deployment tools, replacement of the EPA.ie technical infrastructure, and on-going improvement in capability for self-sufficiency through knowledge transfer to internal staff on technology changes.

- The Hydrometric network operated by the EPA was reviewed in conjunction with the Office of Public Works and a more streamlined, focussed network is being put in place in consultation with local authorities.
- Hydrometric work historically undertaken by a two person team in two locations is now been undertaken by one person while one hydrometric office was closed completely following staff retirements with the work now being undertaken by staff from other locations. Together with greater use of technology, these changes have effectively absorbed the work of three staff.
- The Environmental Data Exchange Network (EDEN) was developed significantly during the year to streamline the process of exchanging and reporting of environmental data between local authorities and the EPA. The most recent development (January 2012) includes a portal for local authorities to interact with the EPA on waste water discharge licences and this gives productivity gains by reducing the time and effort required for this process for both EPA and Local Authority staff. Overall, EDEN is delivering significant cost avoidance and internal efficiencies in relation to reporting of statutory environmental information.
- EPA reviewed its laboratory services and streamlined them from a five-lab structure to a four- lab structure. This allowed for the optimal deployment of staff to meet EPA statutory priorities and to address new responsibilities (e.g. in air quality and bathing water quality). The revised laboratory structure is achieving significant productivity gains by delivering similar levels of samples analysed with 3 fewer staff than in 2010/2011.
- The EPA has undertaken a range of initiatives in the past year that have led to significant internal efficiencies in the EPA laboratory service. These include roll-out of full electronic reporting of analytical results to internal and external clients; central purchasing of laboratory consumables and equipment servicing; implementing risk-based monitoring for EPA monitoring of licensed facilities. The work on streamlining and reporting has been shortlisted for a Taoiseach's public service excellence award.
- Following the abandonment of the site by the licensee in early 2011, the EPA took over the management of the Kerdiffstown Landfill in Co. Kildare. Since the EPA took over the management of the site, significant steps have been taken to manage and minimise the environment impacts. This project required a significant injection of resources at short notice by the EPA and was made possible by the level of flexibility, cooperation, productivity and adaptability of relevant staff involved from across the EPA.

The on-going management, site investigation and remediation of this site continues to be resourced from within the existing staff compliment of the EPA.