

The 9th meeting of the 8th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday 8th March 2023, in the EPA Regional Inspectorate, McCumiskey House, Richview, Clonskeagh Square, Dublin 14.

Members present: Laura Burke (Chair), Aebhín Cawley, Aoife Foley, Frances Lucy, Elaine Mahon, Brendan Dunford, Elaine Nevin, Niamh Lynam-Lennon & Thomas Cooney.

In attendance: Gerard O' Leary & Eimear Cotter.
Tara Higgins & Ian Bruswick – Agenda item 6 (i) & 6 (ii).

Apologies: Yvonne Mullooly, John Wenger & Sadhbh O' Neill.

Secretary: Elaine Kehoe.

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

Laura Burke welcomed the Advisory Committee for their 9th meeting.

The adoption of the Agenda was approved.

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 11 January 2023**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 January 2023 were approved.

3. **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interests declared.

4. **Emerging Issues**

Laura Burke welcomed Dr Niamh Lynam-Lennon as a new member of the EPA Advisory Committee and congratulated Niamh on her appointment.

The Committee were appraised of the total agreed and approved budget for 2023. Laura advised the Committee that the Comptroller and Auditor General will commence an audit in March on the EPA accounts for 2022.

The Committee were provided with an update on Blended Working. Laura advised that the EPA Blended Working Policy was approved and will see staff working from home up to a maximum of two and a half days per week depending on their roles. The blended working application process will be rolled out shortly with blended working arrangements in place from May 2023.

The Committee were provided with an update on staffing numbers and the ongoing recruitment competitions along with other HR statistics for 2022. Laura informed the Committee that the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications have sanctioned an additional twenty-eight new posts. The Committee were advised that the majority of the new posts were in the energy, climate and enforcement sectors.

The Committee were advised that Sharon Finegan resigned as Director of the Office of Environmental Sustainability, with effect from April 2023. A competition for a

new Director will commence shortly.

The Committee were advised that the Land Use Evidence Review Phase 1 Report was due to be published by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine.

There was a discussion on the gender break down within the EPA. The Chairperson advised the Committee that a Gender Pay Gap Report has been completed by the EPA and an update would be provided to the Committee in due course.

The Chairperson informed the Committee of the upcoming Climate Change Conference on 25 May.

Discussion

A wide-ranging discussion was had including:

- National Ecosystems Monitoring Network;
- Greening the EPA buildings;
- Ambient monitoring stations and monitoring;
- Climate Change and ongoing survey work;
- Land use review;
- Diversity and Inclusion in the EPA.

Actions:

Board Secretary to organise a presentation on the ecosystems monitoring network for the next meeting.

The Board Secretary will circulate the invite for the Circular Economy conference to all Committee members.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Office of Evidence and Assessment

Presentation on bridging the science to policy gap

Tara Higgins, Programme Manager gave a presentation on the area of science to policy and knowledge transfer in the EPA. The presentation provided details on:

- Barriers and enablers to knowledge transfer;
- Knowledge transfer activities in the EPA;
- Examples of successful knowledge transfer; and
- Taking the science to policy agenda forward.

Discussion/Comments

A discussion was had on: the science to policy gap; the role of science in supporting policy makers; knowledge transfer and the area of policy and how the EPA project supports further action in this area.

Office of Communications and Corporate Services

Presentation on EPA Communications Recommendations

Ian Brunswick, Senior Manager gave a presentation on the recommendations to the EPA from the Advisory Committee Report in 2019. The recommendations related

specifically to aspects of communications activities. The presentation provided details on:

- Building capacity and adopting best practice;
- Communications Strategy;
- EPA website; and
- Media interest in the EPA.

Discussion/Comments

A discussion was had on: target audience and segmenting the market; the young scientist exhibition; the Communications Strategy and engaging new audiences and platforms; and the EPA website with new functionality and content, allowing it to become more interactive and accessible.

7. **End of Term Report**

A brief discussion was had on the approach to deliver an Advisory Committee End of Term Report to the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications. An update on topics outlined in the previous report from 2019 was circulated to all Committee members, to support the drafting of the 2023 Report.

8. **Any Other Business**

(i) Next Meeting

The next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday 23rd June 2023 in EPA Headquarters in Wexford. A Doodle poll will issue to members seeking alternative dates for the next meeting. It was agreed that the next meeting would commence at 2:00pm to allow Committee members to travel on the day.

(ii) Topics for Inclusion

Topics for inclusion for the next meeting are:

- Presentation on the National Land Cover Map
- Presentation on Ecosystems Monitoring Networks

This concluded the business of the meeting.