

The 10th meeting of the 8th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday 5th July 2023, in the EPA Headquarters, Johnstown Castle Estate, Wexford.

Members present: Laura Burke (Chair), Aebhín Cawley, John Wenger, Yvonne Mullooly, Thomas Cooney, Elaine Nevin, Niamh Lynam-Lennon, Sadhbh O' Neill (via Video Conference), & Brendan Dunford (via Video Conference).

In attendance: Gerard O'Leary, Micheál Lehane & Eimear Cotter.
Gavin Smith, Tara Higgins & Pat Byrne – Agenda items 7 (i) & 7 (ii).

Apologies: Aoife Foley, Elaine Mahon & Frances Lucey.

Secretary: Elaine Kehoe.

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

Laura Burke welcomed the Advisory Committee for their 10th meeting.

The adoption of the agenda was approved.

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 8 March 2023**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 March 2023 were approved.

3. **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interests declared.

4. **End of Term Report**

A brief discussion was had on the end of term report and the approach to deliver the report to the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications. The Committee was advised that the draft report is underway, and many sections have been completed by Yvonne Mullooly (Committee member). It was agreed to hold a separate meeting to discuss the draft report and recommendations.

Action:

The Board Secretary will circulate an invite to all Committee members to discuss the draft report.

5. **Emerging Issues**

Laura Burke appraised the Committee that the 2022 Accounts had been signed off by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Chairperson advised the annual report would be submitted to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications this week.

The Committee were appraised of the total approved budget for 2023. Laura provided the Committee with an update on staffing numbers and the ongoing recruitment competitions along with other HR statistics. Laura informed the Committee that the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications sanctioned an additional twenty-eight new posts and twenty of those post have been

filled.

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

The Committee was provided with an update on Blended Working. Laura advised that 80% of staff are availing of blended working and 52% of staff have opted for the maximum of two and half days per week.

The Chairperson advised that the outputs from Phase 1 of the National Land Use Evidence Review led by the EPA Analytics team was successfully completed in quarter 4, 2022 and is due to be published by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

The Committee was appraised of Work Vivo, the new internal social platform which launched earlier this year. Laura advised that we have already achieved 90% adoption rate, which is very high when compared to the industry standard of 60%. Laura also advised the Committee of external communications including:

- **11 May:** Bathing Water Report was released;
- **26 May:** New EPA online portal launched providing greater transparency and easier public access to environmental enforcement information;
- **2 June:** GHG projections report was released;
- **9 June:** Prosecution from EPA investigation going back two decades was successfully concluded in the courts;
- **14 June:** Water Quality report released at Annual Water Conference in Galway;
- **28 June:** Wastewater Treatment System report released; and
- **29 June:** Food Waste Charter launched.

There was a discussion on the 30th anniversary of the EPA. The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Research team engaged the assistance of a consultant historian to undertake a historical overview of the establishment of the EPA in Ireland. Laura advised that the report would be circulated to Committee members.

Action:

The Board Secretary will circulate the report to all Committee members and organise a presentation on the ‘establishment of the EPA in Ireland’ in due course.

6. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

7. **Office of Evidence and Assessment**

(i) Presentation on the National Land Cover Map

Gavin Smith from the Analytics Team gave a presentation on the National Land Cover Map. The presentation provided details on:

- Definition of Land Cover;
- Reasons for making a Land Cover Map;

- Land Cover Map - Use Cases.

Discussion/Comments

A discussion was had on the usability of the Land Cover map; the data captured for the map; the role of citizen science can play in this area and future-proofing the tool.

(ii) Presentation on Environmental Monitoring Networks

Patrick Byrne, Programme Manager gave a verbal presentation on the Environmental Monitoring Networks. The presentation provided details on:

- National Ambient Air Monitoring Networks;
 - Pollutants measured;
 - Ambient Air quality - 3-day forecast
- National Radiation Monitoring Network (NRMN);
 - European Commission Data (EURDEP)
- National Eco-systems Monitoring Network (NEMN)
 - Essential partners involved; and
 - Details on how NEMN is set up.

Discussion/Comments

A discussion was had on the ammonia figures, monitoring stations, work in the radiation laboratories in Dublin, air quality website and the use of LIFE emerald.

Action:

The Chairperson to provide statistics and trends on air quality at the next Advisory Committee meeting.

8. Any Other Business

(i) Next Meeting

The next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday 28th September 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 2:00 p.m. to allow Committee members to travel on the day.

(ii) Topics for Inclusion

A Doodle poll will also be issued to members seeking a list of topics for inclusion in the next meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting.