

The 7th meeting of the 9th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Thursday 14 May 2026, in McCumiskey House Richview, Dublin.

Members present: Eimear Cotter (Chair), Frances Lucy, Aisling Ryan, Jerry MacEvilly & Conor Talbot (via Video Conference).

In attendance: Darragh Page.

Sean O'Donoghue - Agenda item 6(i)

Gina Kelly – Agenda item 6(ii)

Apologies: Ali Sheridan, Aleesha Wiegandt, Geraldine O'Sullivan & Mark Christal.

Secretary: Pauline Wilson.

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

Eimear Cotter welcomed the Advisory Committee for their 7th meeting.

The adoption of the agenda was approved.

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 15 December 2025**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 December 2025 were approved.

3. **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interests declared.

4. **Emerging Issues**

The Chair informed the committee that the Department is actively working to fill vacancies on the Advisory Committee as a result of the Term of a number of Members ending and that it is expected these will be filled by July.

The Chair provided the Committee with an update on the recent activities of the EPA's Board, updating that following the recent retirement of Laura Burke as Director General on March 7th, Dr Eimear Cotter was appointed and commenced in her role as Director General of the EPA on the 8th March. The Committee were also updated that Dr Tom Ryan was appointed by the Board as Deputy Director General with immediate effect at the March General Board meeting. The Board visited and hosted a Board meeting at the Castlebar and Monaghan regional offices in recent weeks with plans to hold meetings in Cork on 19th May and Kilkenny on July 7th. Eimear advised the Committee that Roni Hawe commenced as Director of the Office of Evidence and Assessment on March 24th and that the Board is now at full compliment.

The Chair provided the Committee with an update on the EPA's budget for 2026 and noted that income and expenditure are in line with expectations. The EPA is continuing to engage with DCEE and the DHLGH on funding allocation for 2026 with confirmation expected in the coming weeks.

Eimear appraised the Committee that the vacancy rate now stands at 1.8%. A total of 5 recruitment campaigns were completed in 2026 so far with another campaign having recently commenced, 12 posts have been filled to date. The Committee were also updated on the numbers of vacancies, resignations, new starts, job offers and ongoing recruitment competitions. Eimear updated the Committee that the EPA is continuing to engage with DCEE/DHLGH with regard to the Workforce Plan on a number of positions.

The Committee were also updated that the Environmental Miscellaneous Provisions Bill which amends the EPA Act has passed through the Oireachtas and amendments have been enacted in the last few weeks. The Committee were further briefed on the key changes provided for in the new Act including timelines for decision making, Limited Licence Reviews and the expanded use of Technical Amendments and that the implementation of these changes will be a priority for the EPA.

The Chair also briefed the Committee that work began in April 2025 on designing and testing of a new Personal Development Plan (PDP) for EPA staff and that this has now been completed and implemented as a new module on the Core HR system.

The Committee were updated on a number of HR policies which were reviewed and updated throughout 2025:

- the revised Blended Working Policy
- Flexible Working Hours Scheme Policy
- Parental & Force Majeure Policy
- Staff Induction Policy
- alongside the introduction of the new Shorter Working Year Policy and
- Right to Disconnect Policy.

The Chair informed the Committee on other areas including: the Accelerated Infrastructure Action Plan, which aims to fast-track the delivery of critical infrastructure in Ireland. the EPA were invited to present at the Taskforce on Accelerated Infrastructure, chaired by the Minister Jack Chambers, the number of Judicial Reviews related to EPA decisions, which have increased in recent years; and the outcome of the IRRS mission to Ireland which took place in January 2026 and following a significant review there were 21 recommendations, 9 suggestions, 1 good practice and 4 good performances found by the Mission team and detailed in the IAEA Mission report for Ireland.

Eimear updated the Committee on the EPA's role and involvement in supporting DCEE during the Presidency which starts on July 1st. Key activities for the EPA include; staff in the climate programme supporting the UN's multi-lateral negotiation processes including COP31, support for Cyprus Presidency in H1 2026; Technical support to DCEE in progressing key legislative packages in: ETS, CBAM and the Circular Economy Act.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. **(i) Infrastructure and changes to licensing requirement for EPA – Sean O’Donoghue**

Sean O’Donoghue gave a presentation to the Committee providing an overview of the Environmental Miscellaneous Provision Act 2026 which amends the EPA Act 1992 and the Waste Management Act 1996 for the purposes of Industrial Emission Licensing, Integrated Pollution Control, waste licensing and its implications for the EPA including:

- Timelines – by category of licence application
- Process improvements to meet the reduced timelines
- Process improvements implemented to date
- Other changes - piloting and new ways of working – feedback from practitioners – ICT developments – ongoing training

Discussion/Comments

A discussion was had on a range of issues: including the timelines and categories, focusing on tighter timelines and turnaround of applications for the Agency and its implications; increased licencing demands due to an increase in volume and complexity of both applications and legislation; variable application quality and the importance of ensuring better quality applications; the potential to refuse to consider applications if below standard; streamlining and prioritising licensing workflows, use of case studies and pattern analysis to improve the processes and identify bottlenecks; consultation with other agencies to identify effective practices; improved processes and continued ongoing training and workshops: the critical importance of maintaining environmental standards was discussed and emphasised.

(ii) Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) – Gina Kelly

Gina Kelly gave a presentation to the Committee providing an overview of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) in Ireland and its implementation to date including:

- EPA’s role as the National Competent Authority (NCA) for CBAM;
- Overview of application and imports per sector – including Iron and Steel, Fertiliser, Aluminium and Cement Sector;
- The verification & CBAM declaration timeline, with full implementation phase from 2026
- Proposed amendments to CBAM regulation – secondary legislation published setting out the rules of CBAM – to address risk of carbon leakage
- The key area of focus for the CBAM Team during 2026 & 2027

Discussion/Comments

There was a wide-ranging discussion, including the ongoing challenges and complexities of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) as it transitions through the phases; administrative and compliance burdens with significant reporting obligations for importers; increased costs associated with compliance, verification, and auditing; industry concerns related to complexity, issues with the UK now being a third country; purchase of CBAM certificates; the discussion concluded with acknowledgement that the challenges posed by CBAM, particularly around compliance and administrative burden, which will continue to place demands on EPA as the Competent Authority.

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 Climate, Energy and the Environment. Eimear advised the Committee that the EPA will provide all the necessary supporting information required to draft the Report which would focus on the main issues considered by the Committee during its term of office. Aisling Ryan agreed to lead the development of the End of Term Report and will be supported by the other members in its preparation.

Any Other Business

Next Meeting

Date for the next meeting 6 July 2026 Dublin

Topics agreed for inclusion at the next meeting:

- Update on the EU Presidency and EPA activities
- Climate Change in the Irish Mind (CCIM)

Eimear thanked the speakers and Committee members for their contribution, ideas and recommendations. Eimear expressed her thanks to Frances Lucy for her valued contribution to the Committee during her term and wished her well for the future.

This concluded the business of the meeting.