

The 8th meeting of the 9th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Monday 6th July 2026, in McCumiskey House Richview, Dublin.

Members present: Eimear Cotter (Chair), Aisling Ryan, Conor Talbot (via Video Conference), Geraldine O’Sullivan, Jerry MacEvilly (via Video Conference) & Mark Christal.

In attendance: Tom Ryan.

Conor Quinlan - Agenda item 6(i)
Darragh O’Neill & Desmond O’Mahony – Agenda item 6(ii)

Apologies: Ali Sheridan & Aleesha Wiegandt.

Secretary: Pauline Wilson.

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

Eimear Cotter welcomed the Advisory Committee for their 8th meeting.

The adoption of the agenda was approved.

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 14 May 2026**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 May 2026 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 continuing to work to fill vacancies on the Advisory Committee arising from the expiry of the terms of office of a number of members.

The Committee were also updated that Dr Tom Ryan was appointed by the Board as Deputy Director General. Eimear advised the Committee that the Board is now at full complement following the appointment of Roni Hawe as Director of the Office of Evidence and Assessment.

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 Committee was also advised that, following the passage of the Environmental Miscellaneous Provisions Bill through the Oireachtas, amendments to the EPA Act have now been enacted. Eimear advised that the key provisions relate to changes to licensing and statutory provisions in relation to timelines which will be a priority for the EPA to meet. The EPA has already begun applying the revised timelines to all new applications received, ahead of the formal commencement of the Regulations.

The Chair informed the Committee that the EPA in support of the Accelerated Infrastructure Action Plan and the delivery of more timely licensing decisions, the EPA has reallocated staff resources from other programmes to more than double the capacity dedicated to licensing decisions relating to wastewater and water abstraction applications. The Committee were informed that as part of the commitments presented to the Accelerated Infrastructure Taskforce the EPA will publish a Licensing Monthly Metrics Report, supporting improved transparency around regulatory decision-making.

Eimear updated the Committee on the EPA's role and involvement in supporting DCEE during the Presidency which commenced on July 1st and that two staff have been dedicated to supporting the presidency. The committee were updated on key activities for the EPA including; providing technical support to DCEE in progressing key legislative information in: ETS, CBAM and the Circular Economy Act.

The Committee were further updated that the current EPA strategy is due to conclude at the end of 2026 and that work has already commenced on the development of a new EPA Strategy. Following discussions at the Senior Management Network, a dedicated group has been established to lead the strategy development process. In addition, a tender has been issued to procure external expertise to support the development of the new Strategy.

Eimear appraised the Committee on HR matters and advised that eight recruitment campaigns had been completed in 2026, with a further three campaigns currently underway. Six vacancies remained at the end of June, resulting in a vacancy rate of 1.45%. The Committee were also updated on the numbers of vacancies, resignations, new starts and job offers.

Eimear appraised the committee on recent communications issued by the EPA including: 'Water Quality in 2025 an Indicators Report', 'The National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP) Report 2025', 'Domestic Waste Water Treatment System Inspections 2025 Report', Greenhouse Gas emissions projections for period 2025-2055' and 'Drinking Water Quality in Public Supplies Report 2025'

5. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

6. **(i) Update on the EU Presidency and EPA activities – Conor Quinlan**

Conor Quinlan gave a presentation to the Committee providing an overview on the EPA's activities and support relating to Ireland's Presidency of the EU -

- Rotation of the Presidency
- Ireland/Lithuania/Cypress – Trio Priorities and Ireland's Presidency priorities
- Supporting Role of EPA and activities
- Ireland's support during he Cypriot Presidency
- Presidency Events led by EPA/EPA technical support or participation events
- Area's of Technical support including; Circular Economy, International Chemicals & Synergies (WPIEI) Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, WP on Atomic Issues, EU20240 Target, EU ETS & CBAM

- Ireland Presidency Climate Priorities

Discussion/Comments

A wide-ranging discussion was held on Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This included the EPA's support for the Presidency through the secondment of a number of EPA staff to Presidency roles and the provision of strategic advice informed by the EPA's technical expertise and experience. The discussion also covered the EPA's key Presidency activities, including EPA-led Working Groups and the Presidency lead role for the Working Party on International Environmental Issues (WPIEI). Progress on emissions reductions and the challenges associated with meeting EU climate targets in advance of COP31, as well as issues relating to the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and a planned initial review as the EU moves towards full implementation. The priorities of the Irish Presidency and their implications for environmental policy and regulation were also considered.

(ii) Climate Change in the Irish Mind – Desmond O'Mahony & Darragh O'Neill

Desmond O'Mahony and Darragh O'Neill gave a presentation to the Committee providing an overview of the Climate change in the Irish Mind (CCIM) which is a large-scale, nationally representative survey of the Irish population's climate change beliefs, risk perceptions, policy preferences, and behaviour towards climate change:

- Background & evolution of the CCIM survey
- CCIM survey Methodology
- Key findings from CCIM survey
- Public & Stakeholder engagement
- Concerns around climate change beliefs
- Policy support and what is being done
- CCIM Resources and Reports

Discussion/Comments

There was a wide-ranging discussion, the evolution of the Climate Change in the Irish Mind Survey and that changes observed and beliefs remain consistent since the survey was first undertaken, the importance of the survey as a valuable evidence base providing expert insights and evidence on public perceptions around climate change; increased concern about environmental risks including extreme weather, flooding, extreme heat and wildfires and its potential risk to communities, the importance of communication norms around climate change behaviours in strategic communications; the development of tailored messaging and promoting the benefits of climate action and use of clear metrics to demonstrate progress, identifying opportunities to engage all socio-economic groups, The Committee was advised that the survey had identified a weakening in support for policies affecting non-discretionary spending, an increasing need for enhanced environmental education, and rising levels of environmental anxiety among young people; building on existing cross-sectoral environmental initiatives, identifying opportunities to strengthen engagement with policymakers and young people, need to identify opportunities for upskilling and supporting transitions into sustainability-related employment was also highlighted.

7. **End of Term Report**

Eimear Cotter addressed the Committee on the content and delivery of an Advisory Committee Report to the Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment and assured the members that the EPA will provide all the necessary information for its completion. Aisling Ryan volunteered to be the lead author of the report at the previous meeting held in May 2026. A discussion was held on the main themes, structure and recommendations of the report, including a proposal to introduce a new section focused on emerging strategic issues and future direction. The Committee agreed that Aisling Ryan would coordinate and arrange an initial meeting to discuss the focus and content of a first draft of the report.

Any Other Business

Next Meeting

Date for the next meeting is Wednesday 9th September 2026. The meeting will be held in the EPA Regional Inspectorate, McCumiskey House, Richview, Clonskeagh Road, Dublin14.

Eimear thanked the speakers and Committee members for their contribution, ideas and recommendations. Eimear also thanks Aisling Ryan for volunteering to be the lead author on the drafting of the Report to the Minister.

This concluded the business of the meeting.