

The 10th meeting of the 7th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday, 12th June 2019, in Cloughjordan Ecovillage, Co Tipperary.

Members Present: Laura Burke (Chair), Seán Finan, Cara Augustenborg, Rónán Kennedy, Elaine Nevin, Seán Finlay, Ina Kelly, Harold Kingston and Áine Ryall.

In attendance: Ann Lyng

Apologies: Colette Byrne

Secretary: Mary Donohoe

1. **Introductions**

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

2. **Approval of the Agenda**

The adoption of the Agenda was approved.

3. **Minutes of Meeting held on 21 March 2019**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 March 2019 were approved.

4. **Emerging Issues**

Laura Burke informed the Committee that the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment is progressing applications for the vacant positions on the Advisory Committee and are moving towards rolling Committees.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the EPA budget allocation for 2019 is nearing completion but confirmation of the Environment Fund allocation is still outstanding.

Laura informed the Committee that amendments to the Performance Delivery Agreement have been agreed with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the revised PDA will be signed shortly.

Laura updated Committee members on the appearance of the EPA before the Public Accounts Committee in April where the Agency provided responses to a range of queries. The Committee noted the positive comments from the PAC on the provision of comprehensive information by the EPA in a timely manner.

The Committee were provided with an update on staffing numbers and the ongoing recruitment competitions. Laura appraised the Committee on the prestigious Eisenhower Fellowship which is currently being undertaken by Dr Eimear Cotter, Director of Environmental Sustainability, concerning Climate and behaviour. The Committee was updated on lateral moves of Programme Managers within the Agency and advised that a new Programme Manager has been appointed to the Office of Environmental Sustainability. Laura informed the Committee that 9 new posts have been sanctioned for Water related activities with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and that there is continual engagement between the Agency and the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE) on a small number of priority posts to address Licence and Enforcement requirements.

The Committee were updated on the external review of the Agency which is being conducted by the OECD.

Laura appraised the Committee on the recent launches of: the ‘Story of your stuff’ secondary school’s competition, the EPA Research Call, the National Waste Prevention Programme Circular Economy Call, ETS Emissions 2018, Radon in Workplaces, Emissions of Ammonia and the Bathing Water report. The Committee were informed of recent events including the Climate Change Lecture, EU Green Week, Globe Schools event, the Climate Conference and the Water Conference; and upcoming events such as the Waste Conference in June.

Discussion

A wide ranging discussion was had including the challenges of retaining existing staff; the availability to air quality information; the need for joined up planning and integrated systems to communicate information to the public; the commitment to reductions in coal burning; the availability of air quality data; improvements in bathing water quality; and the effects of radon and open fires on indoor air quality.

Action:

The Committee will be advised of new appointments to the Advisory Committee. Dr Eimear Cotter will give a presentation to the Committee on the Eisenhower Fellowship at the next meeting.

5. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

6. **Office of Communications and Corporate Services**

Presentation on EPA Budget Trends and Fees

Ann Lyng gave a presentation providing an overview of the Agency’s Budget Trends and Fees income. The presentation provided details on:

- Budgeting Process
- 2019 Annual Budget
- Sources of Income 2014 – 2019
- Environment Fund
- Budgetary Challenges

Discussion

A discussion was had on how the Environment Fund allocation is assessed; whether additional money has been allocated for Climate Action; whether the current fines for licensees are sufficient and the issue of cost recovery for fines; the statutory functions impacted by funding; obtaining a sanction to increase the overall headcount; contingency funding and the prospect of using multi-annual funding; the impact of major risks, such as Brexit, and Risk Management in the Agency.

Action: The Programme is to consider the recommendations, suggestions and comments of the Committee.

7. **End of Term Report**

The Committee acknowledged receipt of agreed documents from the Board Secretary, including the framework document prepared by Áine Ryall and Rónán Kennedy, which will facilitate drafting of the final report. The Committee was reminded that it is established in Law that the Advisory Committee has a statutory duty to make recommendations to the EPA and Minister and that due regard should be given to these recommendations by both the Agency and the Minister.

The members discussed potential topics for inclusion in the report including: communications and engagement with the public; strategic messaging to target

groups; advocacy, campaigning and the national dialogue; partnership and regulation; availability of information and open data to increase stakeholder engagement; resources and funding; supporting policy through the EPA research programme; engaging and empowering individuals in decision making; technology to support accessibility and inclusivity; and citizen journalists. The Committee agreed that the report will be the main item at the next meeting. Laura Burke advised that the EPA will continue to provide all necessary information required by the Committee to support completion of the Report.

Action:

The Committee are to investigate the suggestion to formally present the Final Report to the Minister for Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment in December.

The **Board Secretary** will circulate a copy of the following to the Committee:

- The interim review of the EPA Research Programme, due for publication Summer 2019;
- An assessment of open data held by the EPA from the Office of Evidence and Assessment;

8. **Any Other Business**

(i) Presentations

Action: The Board Secretary will circulate the presentation from today to the Advisory Committee.

(ii) Topic for discussion

The Topic of the Eisenhower Fellowship will be discussed at the next meeting.

(iii) Next Meeting

The next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, 2nd September 2019. The meeting will be held in the EPA Regional Inspectorate, McCumiskey House, Richview, Clonskeagh Road, Dublin 14.

The December meeting of the Advisory Committee meeting is currently scheduled for Monday, 9th December 2019 which falls outside the term of the Committee.

Action: The **Board Secretary** will circulate a revised December date for the final meeting of the 7th Advisory Committee.

Laura thanked the speakers and Committee members for their contribution, ideas and recommendations.

This concluded the business of the first part of the meeting.

The Advisory Committee viewed presentations on the Cloughjordan Ecovillage which was followed by a guided tour of the Ecovillage.

9. **Presentations: Cloughjordan Ecovillage**

- (i) Presentation on '*Cloughjordan Community Farm*' by Dr Oliver Moore
- (ii) Presentation on '*Community Resilience*' by Davie Philippe
- (iii) Presentation on '*the Education Programme at Cloughjordan Ecovillage*' by Veronica Ryan

Discussion

There was a discussion by the Committee following the presentations.

Davie Philippe thanked the Agency for the opportunity to host the presentations. Laura Burke reciprocated Davie's words and extended gratitude to the Cloughjordan Ecovillage for hosting and thanked the speakers for their presentations and contributions.

10. Tour of Cloughjordan Ecovillage by Davie Philippe and Dr Oliver Moore

The meeting concluded.