

The 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> EPA Advisory Committee was held on Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019 in the EPA Regional Inspectorate, McCumiskey House, Richview, Clonskeagh Square, Dublin 14.

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

In attendance: Gerard O’Leary, Eimear Cotter, Tom Ryan, Andy Fanning, Stephen McCarthy

Apologies: Laure Marignol

Secretary: Mary Donohoe

1. **Introductions**

Laura Burke welcomed the Advisory Committee to Cloughjordan for their 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

2. **Introduction of new Advisory Committee Members**

Laura Burke extended a welcome to the two new Members of the Advisory Committee, Ms Aebhin Cawley and Dr Laure Marignol, who were appointed by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action & Environment with effect from 1 July 2019.

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

The adoption of the Agenda was approved.

4. **Minutes of Meeting held on 12 June 2019**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 June 2019 were approved.

5. **Emerging Issues**

Laura Burke informed the Committee that the Agency will liaise with the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment as they progress applications for the vacant positions on the Advisory Committee, when the current term ends on 4 December 2019.

The Chairperson provided the Committee with an update on the EPA’s budget. The Committee were informed that the C&AG Audit for 2018 is now complete and a clean audit certificate has issued. Laura informed the Committee that the estimates have been submitted to the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment for 2020.

The Committee were informed that the revised Performance Delivery Agreement with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is signed and available to view on the website.

The Committee were provided with an update on staffing numbers, the ongoing recruitment competitions and the filling of the new posts in the water area. The Committee was updated on the review of the competency framework and the recruitment process, as part of the HRD Strategy. Laura advised that a request has been made to the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE) for new posts in the areas of Peat Regulations, National Ecosystems

Monitoring and Climate in addition to the existing request for a small number of priority posts to address Licence and Enforcement requirements.

Laura informed the Committee of progress with End of Waste By-product notifications and that guidance on soil and stone by-products was issued in June. The Committee were updated on the external draft review of the Agency which is being conducted by the OECD. A presentation of the report will be made to the Network of Regulators in November 2019, followed by publication of the review in 2020.

Laura appraised the Committee on the recent launch of the Industrial and Waste Licence Enforcement Report 2018; the report on NO<sub>2</sub> levels in Dublin; and the upcoming launches of the annual Air quality report and the Drinking water quality in public supplies. The Committee was also advised on the quantity and range of environmental queries received.

Laura mentioned the upcoming activities such as; the Environment Ireland Conference on 3 October; and the Health and Environment conference on 21 November.

### ***Discussion***

A wide ranging discussion was had including the nature of topics and extent of queries from the public; sources of income and annual budget; implementation of actions in the All of Government Climate Action Plan; the likely impact of Brexit and the challenges of cross-border enforcement; commitment to reductions in coal burning; access to EPA data by the CSO; the availability to air quality information and expansion of the national air monitoring network;

### **Action:**

The Board Secretary will circulate the interim review of the EPA Research Programme which was recently published.

The Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring will provide an update to the Advisory Committee on air quality at the next meeting.

## **6. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **7. Office of Environmental Sustainability**

### ***Participation in the Eisenhower Fellowship***

Dr Eimear Cotter, Director, Office of Environmental Sustainability gave a presentation providing reflections from her participation in the Eisenhower Fellowship in the USA.

### ***Discussion***

A discussion was had on the Eisenhower Fellowship and opportunities for transatlantic collaboration; drawing comparisons on the US approach to communication of environmental information; the challenges of targeting and tailoring environmental messages to specific groups; research into causes and consequences of sea level rise; and giving consideration to consumption-based inventories.

### **Action:**

Eimear is to consider the recommendations, suggestions and comments of the Committee and how they may be incorporated into work in the Climate Change and Circular Economy Programme.

Seán Finlay will circulate a document to members on coastal erosion from the Geological Survey of Ireland.

## 8. **Office of Environmental Enforcement**

### ***Code of Practice for Septic tanks***

Stephen McCarthy, Inspector, Office of Environmental Enforcement gave a presentation on the revised Code of Practice Wastewater Treatment from Single Houses. The presentation provided details on:

- 2009 Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment from Single Houses
- Percolation test
- Low permeability soils research
- Desludging research
- Steering committee
- Public consultation process

### ***Discussion***

A discussion was had on the changes envisaged with the revised Code; technical guidance as a support to planning decisions; content of training for approved assessors; appropriate assessment and ground water protection; regulation and emerging technologies; discharge of water to wells; compliance with Building Regulations; and maintenance of septic tanks.

**Action:** As part of the consultation process, members of the Committee may submit comments on the draft Code to the Office of Environmental Enforcement within 2 weeks.

## 9. **End of Term Report**

The Committee acknowledged receipt of the draft End of Term report, prepared by Áine Ryall and Rónán Kennedy, and commended Aine and Rónán on their work preparing the report.

The members discussed the contents of the draft report including: pace of climate action and informing policy; responsibility for the National Dialogue on Climate Action; the impact of the biodiversity crisis; challenges in waste management; air quality and the use of renewable fuels; communications and engagement with the public; availability of information and open data to increase stakeholder engagement; emergency response plan; supporting policy through the EPA research programme; the constructive engagement of Advisory Committee members; and guidance to future Advisory Committee members.

The Committee agreed that the final draft report will be completed by Áine and Rónán and will be circulated to members for comment. 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 Board Secretary will compile a list of Committee attendees and meeting locations for the 7th Advisory Committee which will be forwarded to Aine Ryall and Rónán Kennedy.

The Board Secretary will circulate the final End of Term report to members for comment.

The Board Secretary will issue a request to the Minister for Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment for the Advisory Committee to formally present the End of Term report at the next Advisory Committee meeting.

10. **Any Other Business**

*(i) Next Meeting*

The next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The meeting location will be confirmed in due course.

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

This concluded the business of the meeting.