

The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the 9th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2024, in the EPA Regional Inspectorate, McCumiskey House, Richview, Clonskeagh Square, Dublin 14.

Members Present: Laura Burke (Chair), Aebhín Cawley, Frances Lucy (via Video Conference), Aisling Ryan, Aleesha Wiegandt, Ali Sheridan, Conor Talbot, Cathal Gallagher, Geraldine O’Sullivan, Jerry Mac Evilly & Mark Christal

In attendance: Gerard O’Leary, Micheál Lehane, Eimear Cotter, Tom Ryan & Darragh Page.

Secretary: Pauline Wilson

1. **Welcome & Introductions**

(i) **Welcome**

The Chairperson, Laura Burke, Director General of the EPA, welcomed the Members to the first meeting of the 9<sup>th</sup> EPA Advisory Committee. She said she was delighted to have such a wide representation on the Committee and was looking forward to their contribution to the work of the Agency during their term of office. She noted the work of the Agency in protecting and improving Ireland’s Environment and highlighted the important role of the Committee to make recommendations to the Agency, or to the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications concerning the functions and activities of the Agency, as set out in Section 28 of the EPA Act 1992 (as amended).

(ii) **Tour de table’ of the Advisory Committee**

The Chairperson invited each Committee member to give a brief biographical introduction. Laura noted that each member has provided a biography for publication on the EPA website.

2. **Presentation on the Operation of the EPA and Advisory Committee**

The Chairperson gave an overview of the functions and activities of the EPA, including: the vision, mission, legislative background, functions, structure and budget. She discussed the working arrangements with the various Departments and other key stakeholders. There was detailed discussion on the governance, independence, transparency, and accountability of the EPA, particularly relating to licensing and enforcement issues. The Chairperson further discussed the role of the Advisory Committee, the recommendations to the Minister from the 8<sup>th</sup> EPA Advisory Committee, the review of the EPA by the OECD and the evolving plan for the development of the next EPA Strategy.

3. **Experience of Membership on the Advisory Committee**

Aebhin Cawley and Frances Lucy provided an insight into their roles as a members of the 8<sup>th</sup> EPA Advisory Committees.

Aebhin Cawley spoke of the privilege to work on the Committee and that she was delighted to be appointed for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Term and stressed how quickly the three-year term passes. She spoke of the changes in how Committee members were appointed to allow for crossover between existing and new member terms. She spoke of how the Advisory Committee is different to other roles with a different mandate to Board roles. She highlighted the importance of having a specific Advisory Committee

work programme which would best support the Agency on priority areas of interest. She advised the new members to look back at the recommendations from the previous End-of Term Report and to consider areas where the committee can add value. The Committee also provides assistance to the Agency with emerging issues. Aebhin stressed the importance and complexity of the Agency's work and the Committee's opportunity to highlight their areas of expertise.

Frances Lucy reiterated Aebhin's comments of the quick passage of the three year term. Frances also spoke on the work of the Committee, and of the value that the Committee adds in terms of the diversity of views and expertise. She urged the new members to consider Themes for discussion and she outlined the process for compiling the End-of Term Report to the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications and advised the group to begin preparation on the End-of -Term Report early.

The Chairperson commented on how the Committee's input and recommendations are valued and reflected in the work of the Agency.

#### 4. **Overview of EPA Offices**

##### ***(i) Office of Communications & Corporate Services***

Mr Gerard O'Leary, Deputy Director General, gave a detailed overview of the work of the Office of Communications & Corporate Services including information on the wide range of activities undertaken by each of the Office units such as: energy reduction across EPA buildings; use of social media; the EPA Website; Human Resources; Health, Safety & Welfare.

##### ***(ii) Office of Evidence & Assessment***

Dr Eimear Cotter, Director, gave a detailed overview of the work of the Office of Evidence & Assessment including information on the wide range of activities undertaken by each of the Office units such as; Water Programme, Evidence Programme, Climate Change Programme, data science and analytics; the Research Framework 2021-2030 and new initiatives; water management and catchment science; and hydrometrics and groundwater assessments.

##### ***(iii) Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring***

Dr Micheál Lehane, Director, gave a detailed overview of the work of the Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring including information on the wide range of activities undertaken by each of the Office units such as: emergency preparedness & nuclear safety; State of Environment Reporting; Radon & Citizen Science; EPA Water Laboratories, Radiation monitoring programmes; air quality; Ecosystems monitoring Network; Non-Ionising Radiation; and areas for potential engagement.

##### ***(iv) Office of Environmental Enforcement***

Dr Tom Ryan, Director, gave a detailed overview of the work of the Office of Environmental Enforcement including information on the wide range of activities undertaken by each of the Office units such as: wastewater treatment enforcement; drinking water enforcement; Radiological Protection regulation; enforcement of licensed sites; enforcement action against illegal peat harvesting and Local Authority oversight.

##### ***(v) Office of Environmental Sustainability***

Darragh Page, Programme Manager, gave a detailed overview of the work of the Office of Environmental Sustainability including information on the wide range of

activities undertaken by each of the Office units such as: Circular economy; Environmental licensing; Emissions Trading System ETS; Carbon Budget Adjustment Mechanism CBAM; waste statistics for Ireland; and the National Waste Prevention Programme.

Following the presentations, the discussions identified various topics of interest to the members of the Committee including;

- Research
- Enforcement
- Local Authority Oversight incl Performance Report
- Data Analytics
- Energy
- Emissions Trading Scheme
- Climate
- State of the Environment Report (SOER)
- Stakeholder Engagement - OEE
- Environment & Health
- Citizen Science
- Radon
- Air Quality
- Cross overs Legislation – IEI, NPWS, Waste Crime Directive

It was decided that members would identify further topics of interest ahead of the next meeting. Presentations will be made by the appropriate staff of the Agency to future meetings of the Advisory Committee which will help clarify and expand on the topics and issues raised at each meeting.

5. **Future Meeting Dates/Agenda**

The Committee were advised that meetings are held quarterly and in person in EPA Headquarters or one of the regional inspectorates. Dates for the next meeting will be circulated and agreed based on availability of the majority.

6. **Any Other Business**

The Chairperson informed the members that the agenda and documentation for all subsequent meetings will be emailed to the members.

All invitations for EPA events will be issued from the Office of Director General.

The Chairperson recapped on the areas of interest and topics for further discussion. She committed to setting out the various topics in a Work Programme for consideration by the Committee for 2024/2025 and invited the members to nominate topics of interest for future meetings.

Laura noted that all presentations will be issued to Committee members in advance of meetings and engagement is planned with the Committee in the development of the EPA Strategy.

The Chairperson thanked the members of the Committee for their contributions to the discussion and their attendance at the meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting.