

The 7th meeting of the 6th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Thursday 4th September 2014, in Room 104, Orbsen Building, NUI Galway.

Members Present: Laura Burke (Chair); John Cuddihy; Martin Hogan; John Sheahan; David Ball; Elaine Nevin; Sharon McGuinness; Colin O'Dowd; Pat Farrell; Áine Ryall (via Telephone).

In attendance: Dara Lynott; Matt Crowe; F McGovern; M Lehane; Dr Damien Martin NUIG; & Prof Colin Brown NUIG.

Apology: Deirdre Lyons; Elizabeth Delahunty.

Secretary: Tom O Reilly

1. **Introductions**

The Chairperson Laura Burke, welcomed the Advisory Committee and thanked them for travelling to NUI Galway, she further thanked Committee Member Colin O'Dowd for facilitating and helping to organise this meeting of the Committee in Galway.

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 5 June 2014**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 June 2014 were approved.

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

The adoption of the Agenda was approved.

4. **Emerging Issues**

Laura Burke advised the Committee that the budget estimates for 2015 were submitted in August and the Agency has requested €20m from the Environmental Fund and €35m from Exchequer funding. Laura informed the Committee that all the additional sanctioned posts had been filled and recruitment to fill consequential posts would begin shortly. Laura informed the Committee that the Agency has been given a combined Employment Control Framework allocation of 353 for the merged EPA & RPII organisation in 2015. Laura further informed the Committee that the Programme Manager for Human Resources will retire in the coming months and approval to fill this key post has also been secured. The Committee were informed that the merger of the EPA and RPII took effect from 1 August 2014 with the establishment of the Office of Radiological Protection within the EPA. A small number of actions have yet to be completed on the High Level Action Plan, they are being progressed and will be completed shortly. The Chairperson informed the Committee that over the coming months, 2 high profile speakers from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will participate in the Agency's very successful Climate Change Lecture Series and a Regional Radon Awareness Campaign, organised by ORP, will be held in Mayo towards the end of 2014.

5. **Matters Arising**

DECLG Letter requesting views on the merits or otherwise of instituting an external Chair of the EPA Advisory Committee

The Committee discussed the request contained in a letter from the Department of Environment dated 17 July 2014 seeking comment on recommendation 7.2.6 of the EPA Review regarding the membership and chair of the Advisory Committee. It was noted that the Department's letter had been circulated to the committee in advance of the meeting for comment.

Following a brief overview of the topic, Laura asked each of the committee members for their views. Laura noted that there were mixed and varied views from the committee. Overall it was agreed by the members that of more value than the appointment of an external chair, would be for the Advisory Committee to revisit the role and purpose of the Advisory Committee in light of the fact that the legislation governing the Advisory Committee is now over twenty years old. It was further agreed that the Chairperson would draft a letter, for comment by the Committee, for submission to the Department in response to their request.

6. **Resource Efficient Ireland**

(i) Air Quality and Health Impacts – Dr Micheál Lehane and Dr Matthew Crowe, Office of Environmental Assessment

Micheál Lehane and Matthew Crowe, from the Office of Environmental Assessment, gave an overview of the EPA's role in Air Quality and Health including detailed information on:

- Health Impacts of Air Pollution.
- Air Quality Zones and Monitoring Network
- EPA Air Quality Monitoring Stations
- Current Trends in Ireland
- Air Quality Reporting and Information to the Public
- Air Quality Index for Health

(ii) Discussion

There was detailed discussion by the Committee regarding Air Quality and the Air Quality Index for Health. One Committee member pointed out that air monitoring was only carried out in certain locations and the Ballymount fire was a good example of local air quality being affected by local issues. Micheál Lehane informed the Committee that the monitoring stations are moved to provide a broader range of air quality results and that the EPA has mobile monitoring units which can be deployed in specific locations when needed. A number of members raised the possibility of using Citizen Science to obtain Air Quality data throughout the country and it was agreed that the Air Quality Team would progress options for this.

7. **IPCC 5th Assessment Report**

(i) Overview of the IPCC and findings from its 5th Assessment Report

Frank McGovern, from the Office of Climate, Licensing, Research and Resource Use, gave a detailed overview of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and findings from its 5th Assessment Report. The overview included detailed information on:

- Background to the IPCC
- Drivers of Climate Change
- Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide
- Future Impacts of rising temperatures
- Ways to limit Global Warming

(ii) Discussion

There was detailed discussion by the Committee following the presentation. Dr McGovern informed the Committee that both China and the USA are moving towards renewables and this provides hope for the future. The Chairperson highlighted the work of the Agency in informing, assessing and promoting positive acts on climate changes to policy makers and the public.

8. **Recent Advances in Atmospheric Composition, Air Pollution & Climate Change**

Dr Damien Martin from NUI Galway gave a presentation to the Committee on research being carried out by the University on Atmospheric Composition, Air Pollution & Climate Change. The presentation included information on the following:

- Observing Trends
- Forecasting Air Pollution
- Projecting Climate Change
- Mase Head Atmospheric Research Station
- Air Pollution and Climate Change Modelling

Following discussion, Laura Burke on behalf of the Committee thanked Dr Martin for giving the Committee a very informative and interesting presentation.

9. **Overview of Research at NUI Galway's Ryan Institute**

Professor Colin Brown from NUI Galway gave a presentation to the Committee on the Research undertaken at NUI Galway's Ryan Institute. The presentation included information on the following:

- The Ryan Institute Ethos
- The Ryan Institute International Outlook
- Priority Research Areas
- The Integrated academic, commercial and agency centre
- The Future of Research

Following discussion, Laura Burke on behalf of the Committee thanked Prof Brown for taking the time to provide an overview of the research undertaken by the Ryan Institute.

10. **Any Other Business**

(i) Next Meeting

The Chairperson thanked the Members of the Committee for their attendance at the meeting and their contributions to the discussion. Laura further thanked Colin O'Dowd for facilitating the meeting at NUIG. It was agreed that the next meeting would take place in the Office of Radiological Protection Offices, Clonskeagh Square, Dublin 14.

(ii) Topics for discussion

The Topics to be discussed at the next meeting on 11 December 2014 are as follows;

- Presentation of the work of the Office of Radiological Protection
- Public Procurement Guidance
- Role of the Advisory Committee and Section 28 of the EPA Act.

This concluded the business of the meeting.