

The 2nd meeting of the 7th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Thursday 25 May 2017, in the EPA Regional Inspectorate, John Moore Road, Castlebar, County Mayo.

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

In attendance: Dara Lynott, Gerard O’Leary, Tom Ryan, Mick Henry and Kealan Reynolds.

Apologies: Fiona Lyng

Secretary: Isobel Walsh

1. **Introductions**

The Chairperson welcomed the Advisory Committee to the Castlebar Regional Inspectorate for their 2nd meeting, following a tour by the members of the Castlebar laboratory.

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 27 January 2017**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 January 2017 were approved, subject to minor amendments.

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

The adoption of the Agenda was approved.

4. **Emerging Issues**

Laura Burke advised the Committee that the EPA budget for 2017 is on track and that the Agency is awaiting final approval for the 2016 accounts by the C&AG.

Laura advised the Committee that the Agency currently has 392 posts, with a number of recruitment competitions commenced in Q1 2017. The Committee were advised that the Agency’s workforce plan/staffing request for a small number of priority posts are with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Laura provided an update on the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the future funding of domestic water services and the Agency’s role as an environmental regulator.

Laura appraised the Committee on the recent launches, in particular the: ‘Story of your stuff’ secondary schools competition; bathing water report; research call (worth €8.2m); European research funding; Emissions projections and private water supplies. Laura also mentioned the upcoming events of the EPA National Water Conference on 21st & 22nd June 2017 and Environment Ireland Conference on 28th September 2017 to which the Advisory Committee members will be invited to.

A short video of the winning entry for ‘Story of your stuff’ was played for the Committee. Committee members suggested that the Agency target a wider audience for the video, examples given included: RTE’s Nationwide program, YouTube and links with the ECO-UNESCO website.

Action: Committee members to be invited to the EPA National Water Conference and Environment Ireland Conference. The Communications Team to engage with ECO-UNESCO to put the link to the ‘Story of your stuff’ on the web.

5. **Presentation on the Castlebar Regional Inspectorate**

Mick Henry, Regional Manager gave a presentation providing an overview of the Inspectorate's functions and regional presence in Castlebar. The presentation detailed information on the following items:

- Establishment, staffing and structures;
- Functions performed by the Office of Evidence & Assessment and Office of Environmental Enforcement; and
- Regional 'Advocacy' innovations:
 - Junior Achievement and 'School to Work' day.

(ii) Discussion

The Committee discussed the presentation and complemented the Castlebar staff on their work. A Committee member commented on the excellent use of technology to automate systems and provide electronic communications via LEMA to licensees. Another member was interested in the Agency's use and operation of drones to assist with operations.

Action: No specific action identified.

6. **Office of Environmental Enforcement**

Presentation on OEE's Enforcement Approach and Priority Sites

Gerard O'Leary, Director of the Office of Environmental Enforcement gave a presentation providing an update on enforcement activities and OEE published reports. Kealan Reynolds, Senior Inspector then gave a presentation on the enforcement system (LEMA) and the targeted enforcement, explaining the methodology used to identify priority sites (PS) and trends to-date.

(ii) Discussion

There was detailed discussion by the Committee following the presentation on the Agency's enforcement approach. Laura advised that the Agency has been invited by the European Commission to speak on the topic. It was noted that 98% of licensees are compliant. One Committee member queried why licensees may remain on the list and Gerard O'Leary explained possible circumstances and the associated enforcement approach. Another member asked if any sector was more prominent than another and Gerard advised that at present the waste and food & drink sectors are most represented on the list. It was noted that the priority sites methodology is kept as simple as possible, whilst being robust in order to make it clear and comprehensible. A member sought clarification on the source of the data being fed into the PS scores i.e. if initiated by the Agency through site visits, public complaints or licensee's reporting. Kealan outlined the various data routes and explained the risk scoring system.

Action: Enforcement to consider feedback from the Committee in the further development of the enforcement approach and priority sites.

7. **Office of Environmental Sustainability**

Presentation on the draft Sustainability Framework–'Living well, using less'

Tom Ryan, Programme Manager for the Sustainable Production & Consumption Programme gave a presentation on the draft EPA Strategic Framework for Sustainability. The presentation detailed information on the:

- EPA strategy 'Towards a resource efficient Ireland' – vision 'Living better, using less' 2020;
- National Waste Prevention Programme – activities; and

- Development of a framework to consolidate and guide EPA activities on sustainability.

(ii) Discussion

There was detailed discussion by the Committee following the presentation on the draft Sustainability Framework. Committee Members made a number of suggestions for consideration by the Agency, namely:

Communities

- Focusing on ‘Communities’ through a town framework/town plans which would incorporate the Agency’s sustainability element. It was noted that care should be taken not to place an additional burden on the same people;
- Develop a clear vision of a ‘Sustainable Community’ and pilot in different size communities. Dara Lynott advised the Committee that a fellowship student is currently working on this project;
- Develop a menu of opportunities which a community can select from;
- Connect with ‘Communities of place/communities of interest’;
- Examine the good practices that are out there and replicate to scale;

Education

- Consider producing a TV programme similar to Operation Transformation to articulate the messages for health and food waste;
- Conduct a public awareness campaign involving children on food waste;
- Conduct a public awareness campaign on littering and incorporate into the sustainability agenda;
- It was noted that there are lots of really good websites. Consider how to get the messages to people. Provide a consolidated list of links;
- Engage with primary/post primary schools and ‘out of schools’;
- Explore the ‘Green Campus’ initiative undertaken by UCC;

Businesses

- Use the Smart Farming multiplier concept for Green Business, through representative organisations i.e. IBEC and local authorities;
- Link health and food waste by food providers reducing portion sizes and reducing food waste;
- Partnering with organisations with expertise;

Others

- Research to achieve a circular economy;
- Sustainable Development Goals – mapping them on activities;
- Consider collections for household waste similar to the farm hazardous waste collection initiative.

Action: The Sustainable Production & Consumption Programme to consider the recommendations, suggestions and comments for the new EPA Sustainability Framework.

8. **Matters Arising**

A member expressed concerns regarding a recent RTE broadcast relating to Climate Change and advised that they are engaging with the media regarding available experts on these topics. Laura advised that the Agency engages with a wide range of people in the media through its Press Office and provides experts and spokespeople as required.

9. **Any Other Business**

(i) Next Meeting

The Committee Member suggested that a future meeting of the Committee would be held in the Cork Regional Inspectorate, subject to Members' availability.

(ii) Topics for discussion

The Topic of 'Research funded by the EPA' will be discussed at the next meeting.

(iii) It was agreed that Members would submit a short biography which would then be uploaded to the EPA website.

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

This concluded the business of the meeting.