

The 1st meeting of the 7th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Friday 27 January 2017, in the EPA Regional Inspectorate, Seville House, Callan Road, Kilkenny.

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

In attendance: Dara Lynott, Micheál Lehane, Micheál Ó Cinnéide, Gerard O’Leary, Matt Crowe, Jonathan Derham and Brendan Wall.

Apologies: Colette Byrne and Fiona Lyng

Secretary: Isobel Walsh

1. **Welcome & Introductions**

(i) Welcome

The Chairperson, Laura Burke, Director General of the EPA, welcomed the Members to the first meeting of the 7th EPA Advisory Committee. She said she was delighted to have such a wide representation on the Committee and was looking forward to their constructive contribution to the work of the Agency during their term of office. She highlighted the importance of the work of the Agency in protecting and improving Ireland’s Environment.

(ii) Tour de table’ of the Advisory Committee

The Chairperson invited each Committee Member to give a brief biographical introduction. Laura suggested that each Member provide 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, and the merger of the EPA and RPII. The Chairperson further discussed the EPA’s Strategy and Strategic Goals, and suggested a number of areas/topics which may be of interest to the members.

3. **Functions & Responsibilities of the EPA Advisory Committee**

In advance of the meeting, the following documentation was circulated to the Members and noted in the meeting:

➤ *Section 27 & 28 of the EPA Act 1992 (as amended) – Establishment & Functions of the Advisory Committee*

The Chairperson explained that the Advisory Committee has a wide role and can make recommendations to the Agency, or to the Minister for the Communications, Climate Action & Environment, concerning the functions and activities of the Agency, as set out in Section 28 of the EPA Act 1992 (as amended).

➤ *Information on Declaration of Interests*

The Chairperson drew the Members' attention to the requirements under the EPA Act relating to Declaration of Interests and asked every member to ensure that they sign the declaration and returned it to Isobel Walsh.

➤ *Note on Confidentiality* prepared for the guidance of Members

The Chairperson stated that the EPA is an open, transparent organisation and is covered by the terms of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 1997 and the Access to Information on Environment Regulations, 1993. However, within the workings of the Committee, it is essential that any discussions by the Members at their meetings are confidential should be treated as such.

➤ *Standing Orders*

The Standing Orders for Meetings of the Advisory Committee were noted.

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

Áine Ryall and Elaine Nevin provided an insight into their role as Members from the 6th EPA Advisory Committee.

Áine Ryall spoke of the privilege to work on the Committee and stressed how quickly the three year term passes. She highlighted the added value of the Committee in terms of the informal discussions and the importance of having a specific work programme which would best support the Agency and have as much impact as possible. She expressed her interests in the areas of: Strategy Implementation, Climate Change and Governance.

Elaine Nevin reiterated Áine's concerns of the quick passage of the three year term and was delighted to be reappointed to the Committee. She emphasised the need for a clear purpose for the Committee, through a specific work programme. She outlined how the previous Committee's expertise, recommendations and inputs were factored into the EPA Strategy and various programmes giving the example of including material on the theme of 'Education for Sustainable Development' in the State of Environment report. She stressed the complexity of the Agency's work and the Committee's opportunity to highlight areas of expertise.

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

5. **Overview of EPA Work Programmes 2017**

➤ *Office of Environmental Sustainability (OES)*

Mr Dara Lynott, Deputy Director, OES, 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.

➤ *Office of Environmental Enforcement (OEE)*

Mr Gerard O'Leary, Director, OEE, gave a detailed presentation on the Office of Environmental Enforcement to the Committee. He gave an overview on the enforcement work and the development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to collect, report and share information.

➤ *Office of Evidence & Assessment (OEA)*

Dr Matt Crowe, Director, OEA, gave a detailed presentation on the Office of Evidence and Assessment to the Committee. He detailed information on the

structure and strategy actions which result in a wide range of activities/projects undertaken by each of the Office units.

➤ *Office of Communications & Corporate Services (OCCS)*

Dr Micheál Ó Cinnéide, Director, OCCS, gave a detailed presentation on the Office of Communications & Corporate Services to the Committee. He detailed information on the structure and range of responsibilities for each of the Office units.

➤ *Office of Radiation Protection & Environmental Monitoring (ORM)*

Dr Micheál Lehane, Director, ORM, gave a detailed presentation on the Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring to the Committee. He detailed the evolution of the office and gave an overview of the office structure and activities/projects undertaken by each of the Office units.

Following each presentation the discussions identified various topics of interest to the members of the Committee including; Green Business (Circular Economy and case studies), Sustainability Framework (including communities, behavioural change/personal responsibility), Enforcement, Public Information and Engagement, Citizen Science, Climate Change (including inventories/projections and mitigation plan), Strategy Implementation, Environmental Governance and licensing.

It was decided to develop an agreed Work Programme and that presentations on particular topics will be made by the appropriate staff of the Agency to future meetings of the Advisory Committee which will help clarify and expand on issues raised at the meeting.

6. **Presentation on the State of Environment Report 2016**

Dr Jonathan Derham and Mr Brendan Wall gave a presentation providing an overview of the State of Environment Report for 2016. The presentation highlighted: the work involved in collating, presenting and disseminating the data, the engagement with key stakeholders, the key findings and key messages, the media involvement, and the use of ICT to communicate and disseminate the information in the report. The Committee Members congratulated the Agency on the excellent report and its use of the various media to convey the key messages. Members suggested extending coverage and engagement with non-traditional groups and noted the challenges in this area.

7. **Future Meeting Dates/Agenda**

The Members noted that the Advisory Committee meets quarterly and it was agreed to set the dates of the next three meetings as follows:

- ***Thursday, 25th May 2017 – EPA Regional Inspectorate, Castlebar***
- ***Thursday, 21st September 2017 - TBA***
- ***Thursday, 7th December 2017 - TBA***

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

8. **Any Other Business**

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 and invited the members to submit any additional items for consideration at future

meetings. Following discussion, the Committee decided that the main Agenda item at the next meeting would begin with *Enforcement*.

The Chairperson thanked the Members of the Committee for their contributions to the discussion and their attendance at the meeting. A special word of thanks went to Dr Rónán Kennedy for attending via video conference.

This concluded the business of the meeting.