



Advisory Group on a 'Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy'

**Second Meeting, 11:00 am, Thursday 27 February 2020 -
Plastics and Packaging Waste**

**Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment,
Adelaide Road, Dublin.**

1. Welcome and Introduction

Philip Nugent opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance. He reminded those present that the focus of the meeting will centre on Plastics and Packaging Waste. The discussion note circulated prior to the meeting was issued with intention of stimulating conversation by raising a number of relevant questions, however those present were reminded that this was not intended to be an exhaustive, prescriptive list and that purpose of this Group is to come up with contributions and suggestions.

2. Presentation on Plastics and Packaging Policy

Niamh NiFhlaithbheartaigh of the Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment delivered a presentation on Plastics and Packaging Policy, focusing on:

- Amendments to the Packaging Directive
- Single Use Plastics Directive (2019/904)

3. Discussion highlights and comments

- The introduction of a deposit and return scheme (DRS) for plastic bottles was discussed. A suggestion was made that all drinks containers should be included in such a scheme. However the potential negative impact of the introduction of a DRS on kerbside recycling was also outlined. The IWMA mentioned a report they had commissioned on the topic which DCCAE agreed to circulate to Group. Philip Nugent suggested that a future meeting of the Group would focus exclusively on the DRS issue which was welcomed by those present.
- Ireland has a greater degree of co-mingled recycled materials than most other European countries. Is there a need to re-examine our current system with a view to further evolving the 3 bin system to target specific materials and potentially reduce contamination through increased segregation? Do we also need to look at the size of recycling bins, frequency of collection, etc.?
- There needs to be greater engagement with the general public to ensure there is greater awareness of the various European targets we as a Member State need to achieve. If the general public are not aware of the targets how can we expect them to work towards achieving them? The public need to be made more aware of their household waste performance through more detailed information on their waste collection weights. The results of an ongoing trial by the IWMA on developing a “recycling index” to show customers how they compare to other households may demonstrate the benefits of such increased awareness. Perhaps waste companies should be encouraged to issue more “push” notifications to their customers on their recycling performance?
- Soft plastics and plastic films continue to constitute a large proportion of residual waste. Dublin Waste to Energy estimate that approximately 20% of all waste material managed at their facility consists of plastics. The recycling list needs to be reviewed to try to capture and recycle more of these soft plastics. However it is accepted that many of these plastics are difficult to recycle and can be difficult to find a market for.

- The move away from single use coffee cups towards reusable keep cups or compostable cups has helped to drive greater consumer awareness of the single use plastics issue generally. However there is a need to ensure that the correct message is being given to the public i.e. swapping a single use plastic cup for a single use compostable cup is still using a single use item.
- Product design and eco-modulation of fees will be critical moving forward. The focus of industry must not be exclusively be on recycling, and the prevention of plastic and packaging must be central to future product design. There is also a critical need to develop viable alternatives to products where no alternatives currently exist, for example certain food containers.
- The low recycling rates and high contamination levels in the commercial sector, as evidenced from EPA waste characterisation studies, needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. In addition the volume of business to business plastic packaging also needs to be examined as much of the current focus seems to be on reducing plastic packaging at a consumer level.
- In summing up Philip Nugent stressed that the Circular Economy does not begin with the consumer but begins with the choices made by producers / manufacturers in terms of the nature of the production process, the quantities produced and the materials used. There is a need to foster an emphasis on quality over disposal, on reparability and durability and ultimately the recyclability of products or the medium through which a product is consumed (e.g. food and beverage containers). He asked attendees to consider how can they and their members as producers / manufacturers and key influencers of consumer behaviour – facilitate circular consumption and a move away from Single Use Plastics? The Department would like to see specific actions / commitments coming from the Group
- Members of the Advisory Group are invited to outline, in writing by **24 April**, the specific actions they can take to reduce the use of plastic and plastic packaging and contribute to meeting our targets in terms of prevention, re-use and recycling of plastic and plastic packaging. A list of specific sectoral questions which arose during the meeting is attached and may help in your

consideration of these issues. Submissions can be sent to:

Denis.Dunne@dccae.gov.ie

4. Next Meeting

A separate note regarding future meetings has issued to all members of the Advisory Group.

Advisory Group on a 'Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy'

Second Meeting, 11:00 am, Thursday 27 February 2020 - Plastics and Packaging Waste

Sectoral questions to be considered

For the Manufacturing/Retail Sector:

- What role can you play in producing viable reusable food containers for on the go consumption?
- What are the obstacles to customers bringing their own food containers to shops?
- Are there additional products that are suitable for consumption reduction
- Can Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes play a role in meeting targets for plastic and packaging waste?
- Could modulated fees drive change and transform our approach to plastic and packaging waste?
- How do we influence decisions made at the product design stage to ensure circular economy design principles are adopted- can a viable, fully recyclable single polymer plastic be manufactured?

For the Waste Industry:

- Can our current co-mingled waste collection model be adapted to enhance collection and recycling rates for plastics and packaging?

- How can waste collection and management practices be improved to enable Ireland's transition to a more resource efficient and circular economy?

For the Hospitality Sector:

- What further changes in B2B practices can be introduced to reduce plastic and packaging waste – the meeting heard of recent innovations in how laundered bed linen is delivered in some establishments.
- How can the current volume of shampoo and cosmetic containers be reduced?

For the Local Government Sector

- How can the event / planning / waste licencing systems be used to reduce the use of single-use plastics. For example, Should planning rules for events include provisions relating to the use of single use plastics for beverages and food?