

Informal Introductory Meeting with Coillte

Tue. 9th January 2024, 2:30pm (online)

Attendees:

Coillte: Deirdre Coleman, Dominic Reilly

DAFM: SM, MON

Meeting summary notes:

1. External Board evaluation

Last evaluation was carried out end 2021 and completed early 2022.

Requirement in COP for evaluation to be carried out every 3 years.

Next evaluation planned for end 2024 with completion in early 2025.

Internal self-assessment of Board's performance (annual requirement as per COP), internal effectiveness review, was carried out end 2023.

2. Annual COP Checklist

Coillte will send remaining updates by Wed. 10/01

3. Executive Appointments (Chair and Board member)

- Bernie Gray is due to conclude her term of office as Chair on 12 March 2024. The campaign for her vacancy closed on 14th December.
Last Board meeting for current Chair is on 29th February.
Coillte would ideally like for selected candidate to be appointed before this date.
SM and DR will enquire about progress made to date with CAD and NewEra.
- DC will start drafting candidate booklet for appointment of Board member replacement.
(Frank Hayes resigned as a Board member in September [REDACTED]. His vacancy will be filled once a new Chair is appointed.)

4. Annual report and accounts 2023

Coillte proposed timeline of 2023 financial process:

- Coillte Board approval of management accounts – 24th January 2024
- Protocol meeting – presentation of management accounts – 1st February
- Draft financial statements to be circulated to Department by end of February (Code requirement)
- Financial statements and Annual Report – Coillte Board approved 28th March
- Notification for AGM to be issued early April
- Draft Annual Report to be shared with Department – early April
- Final Annual Report to be shared at least 2 weeks in advance of AGM (in parallel with Document going to print).
- AGM – 25th April
- Irish translation of Annual Report to be shared in May '24.

5. Annual Section 14 letter

Letter will be sent to DAFM by mid-January. Letters are always sent post Coillte annual budget approval by Board.

6. Property excision lists – Coillte Excision Policy

DAFM will conduct a sample review of property sales in Coillte NTMK in 2024.

The wording in relation to DAFM notification of land sales above €150,000 should be further clarified in the new SLOE. The current SLOE recommends this as good practice, however, Minister should not be seen approving individual sales as this is a Coillte operational matter. Further discussion is required within DAFM and also with NewEra.

7. Shareholder letter of expectation renewal in 2024

DAFM will draft a new SLOE, with assistance from NewEra, in 2024. SLOE should be updated every 2 years on average.

8. FESLUP – timelines

New FESLUP was published on Coillte website in December 2023. Coillte will develop a 10 year Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for the FESLUP in 2024. The SIP will be subject to SEA and AA process and they hope to publish in early 2025.

9. Coillte approach to implementing Forest Management Plans

Coillte has got a portfolio of 644 farm partnerships (12,000ha).

There are issues with approximately 12 partnerships of which approximately 6 have entered a formal arbitration process. Coillte is in direct contact with the remaining 6.

10. Coillte Nature Projects and other Coillte projects update

Project Prime is priority for early 2024, NewEra are expected to finalise report very soon after which consent from Minister is required.

11. People's Millennium Forest – MoU

Mapping has been finalised and registered. Inhibition was made against each property. Monitoring Group should meet 2x pa.

DAFM legal advice awaited before MoU can be signed by MOS. All other signatories required to sign afterwards.

12. 2023 Licence Inspection Report - Findings

Report is currently being finalised. Action Plan is being agreed between DAFM – Coillte felling licences and Coillte.

13. AIEs

- Coillte AIE unit did not meet with The Certification Auditor met with last year.
- Coillte have won 1 appeal against so far.
- **Coillte are happy to share a copy of their AIE Regulation submission (which they engaged Philip Lee Solicitors to assist in preparing) and have asked if we could do the same?**
- The most important issues raised in their submission are:
 - How to deal with AI and automated requests
 - Requests should come from a real person
 - Manifestly unreasonable to be defined

- The conduct of an appellant as well as the pattern of requests should be considered
- Vexatious requests should be defined
- Charging and advance payments should be considered

14. Important dates 2024

- Upcoming consent requests:
 - 1) Project Prime: NewEra currently finalising their report.
 - 2) [REDACTED]
 - 3) Following the next Board meeting, a request for consent for pension increases might be sent to DAFM.
 - 4) [REDACTED]
- Board Chair appointment by end February '24, if possible
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]