An tÚdarás Rialála Limistéir Mhuirí
Maritime Area Regulatory Authority

Minutes of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) Board Meeting

Date	12 September 2023
Venue	Boardroom at the offices of the Commissioners of Irish Lights, Dublin
Time	10:30 – 12:30
Chaired by	Mark Mellett Vice Admiral DSM (Rtd), Phd (MM)
Board Members Present	Ms. Karen Banks (KB) Dr. Ruth Brennan (RB) Mr. Philip Daly (PD) Mr. Patrick Gibbons (PG) Dr. James Massey (JM) Mr. Brendan McGrath (BMcG) Mr. Patrick Moran (PM) Mr. Paul O'Neill (PON) Ms. Alma Walsh (AW)
In attendance	MARA Executive – Ms. Laura Brien (LB), Mr. Rory O'Leary (ROL), Ms. Sorcha Byrne (Secretary), Mr. Connor Rooney (CR), Ms. Niamh NíFhlaithbheartaigh (NNF), Ms. Catherine Rawson (CR), Mr. Neil Maher (NM)

Agenda Items

1. Welcome and apologies
Apologies were noted for Ms Niamh Kenny. Chair welcomed board members and thanked them for attending in person.

2. Declarations of Interest
No declarations made at this meeting.

3. Draft minutes of meeting of 18th July
Minutes adopted. [proposed by BMcG and seconded by PG]

4. Matters arising
PD raised two matters (i) access to approved board policies and (ii) indemnity cover for board members. The Secretary (i) confirmed board policies are saved on Decision Time [Click on Resources tile on home page and then open subfolder "Policy Documents"] and (ii) indemnity cover was confirmed by DPER, and if possible a copy of this cover would be shared with the board on Decision Time.

The Chair invited the CEO to update the board on the Schedule of Matters and Delegation of Functions, who confirmed a review of the MAP Act and Foreshore Act by MARA's legal advisor is pending and revised documents would be presented to the board at the October board meeting. The board agreed these would be considered living documents and be placed on the agenda at least every six months.

The Chair confirmed the current members of the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) are NK (Chair), PON and JM. A process is underway to appointment an external ARC member with finance/accountancy expertise.

The Board discussed and agreed as a principle, board meetings would be in person with an option of remote access, 1 in every 3-4 meetings will take place in Wexford. In principle, the Dun Laoghaire location worked well for board members, and they expressed their thanks to the Commissioner of Irish Lights for making the facilities available, and discussed engaging with CIL re. potential use of boardroom for future meetings. Potential for combining site visits and board meetings in 2024 was discussed, and Chair requested that options for hosting board meetings in Galway and Cork be examined.

BMcG highlighted an outstanding item of arranging an information session on the MAP Act for the board.

5. Operations report by MARA CEO

The CEO presented the operational report to the board. The CEO responded to staffing/recruitment questions from PD, that MARA employees are civil servants, and initial appointments from the upcoming recruitment process will have a probationary period. In response to PON, it was outlined that process details on recruitment have not yet been finalised but the process will be run by MARA with assistance from recruitment consultants and align to the PAS approach of openness and transparency. The Board suggested to extend the candidate market beyond Ireland and utilise alternative approaches such as short term arrangements to respond to work force demands during MARA's establishment phase.

PD sought clarity on the DMAP process in respect of ORE applications and the CEO outlined that discussions will need to take place between MARA, DECC and CRU.

The Chair highlighted the need to develop MARA's enforcement policy and procedures and establish a timeline for resourcing the enforcement unit.

6. Presentation – policy & procedures for licensing

NNF gave the presentation. NNF responded to clarity sought by PON, PG and the Chair, that the drafting of regulations for licence conditions is being prioritised and in due course potentially regulations to provide for annual recurring licence fees. NNF provided detail on the pre-app meeting processes including the assignment of reference numbers to applicants. Arising from discussions on appropriate assessments, the designation of competent authorities and EU reporting requirements, the board expressed a view for greater fidelity especially in respect of the Habitats Directive and undertook to consider this matter at a future board meeting.

7. Presentation – policy & procedures for MACs

CR gave the presentation. Acknowledging that the first MACs have passed the window for lodging judicial reviews, PON commented on the potential for judicial reviews in the future. AW emphasised the need to ensure legislative provisions for this policy are as robust as possible.

The Chair took the opportunity to wish CR well in her upcoming move and acknowledged her impact during the establishment of MARA.

8. Presentation - refurbishment and fit out of MARA's offices

NM gave the presentation on a status update regarding the tender for the fit out of the offices at Menapia House. The CEO highlighted that due to the level of proposed expenditure, this matter will rest with the board for decision. Following board discussions, the Chair highlighted the need for a business case to be put before the board including a cost benefit analysis of the project, inclusion of green public procurement guidance for the public sector and consideration of short to medium approaches and alternatives for the future.

The business case will be submitted on Decision Time for the board's consideration with the option for a written resolution to be taken by the board on this item.

9. Travel policy

The travel policy was presented by the Secretary and approved by the Board. [proposed by BMcG and seconded JM]

10. Consideration of levy framework workshop

The CEO outlined the next steps for the draft levy framework which has broad agreement from the board. A paper detailing the rationale, comparisons and providing further explanation on the approach of the framework will be provided to the board next week on Decision Time seeking approval in principle from the board. The CEO will schedule engagement with DPER, DECC and DHLGH. Following approval of the Board and DPER, the draft levy framework will be published on MARA's website for public consultation (3 week period).

11. AOB

Post the 2023 National Ploughing Championships, the Board agreed going forward no more plastic merchandise items will be procured.

Future agenda items for board consideration include a communications policy and consideration of MARA's website and potential for GIS visualisation.

ENDS.