



An tÚdarás Rialála Limistéir Mhuirí
Maritime Area Regulatory Authority

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

Date	03 December 2024
Venue	The Ormond Building, 31-36 Ormond Quay Upper, Dublin 7
Time	10:30 – 13:00
Chair	Mark Mellett Vice Admiral DSM (Rtd), Phd (MM)
Board Members Present	Ms. Karen Banks (KB) Dr. Ruth Brennan (RB) Dr. James Massey (JM) Mr. Philip Daly (PD) Mr. Paul O’Neil (PON) Ms. Alma Walsh (AW) Mr. Patrick Moran (PM) Mr. Patrick Gibbons (PG) Online Ms. Niamh Kenny (NK) Online Mr. Brendan McGrath (BMCG) Online
In attendance	MARA Executive – Ms. Laura Brien (CEO), Ms. Sorcha Byrne (Secretary), Mr. Anthony Sinnott (AS), Ms. Danielle O’ Dowd (DOD) Mr. Frank Ronan (FR) [Agenda Items 5.2.(ii), 9 & 10]

Agenda Items

1. Non-Executive and Board Evaluation Session (10:30 – 10:45)

2. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed board members.

3. Declarations of Interest

None declared.

4. Minutes

4.1 Board Minutes - The Board approved the following resolution:

That at its meeting on 03 December 2024, the Board adopted the minutes of the MARA board meeting of 29 October 2024 attached at agenda item 4.1.

4.2 ARC Minutes – No ARC Minutes on this occasion, minutes from the October ARC meeting will be reviewed by the ARC at its next meeting scheduled for February 2025.

5. Matters arising

5.1 Action Log

Note: BMCG left the meeting.

The Board reviewed outstanding actions from previous meetings noting:

- Long term action for MARA to host a conference to received further consideration with input from the Chair, PD, AW and KB.
- Recent instances where some board papers were not provided three days in advance of Board meetings.

Action:

- Action log to be a rolling 12-month log, older items to be archived.

5.2 Update on Written Resolutions

5.2.(i). The CEO confirmed the contract for the consultants to support MARA's work on developing a framework for competitive award of MACs will be awarded shortly. The Executive will develop a project plan including opportunities for the Board's involvement. The Board requested that the presentation it will receive on this matter includes information on how the Irish environment compares with other countries.

Action:

- Organise an online workshop with Baringa in January (2hrs duration).

5.2.(ii). The CEO and Director of Corporate Affairs outlined that DECC required further details to be included in a revised format business case for the office fit out project, before DECC and/DPENDPR could give approval. As a result, the 2024 funding will not be drawn down, which will have impacts on the overall approach to project funding. The revised business case put to the Board for its consideration focuses on the building works (excluding furniture and other items) and aligns to the 2025 budget allocation.

The Board identified a legislative provision for BER exemption and directed the Executive to seek its legal unit to review this provision and assess how appropriate it is for the Menapia House facilities. The Board also directed the Executive to finalise a lease amendment for approval in conjunction with the fitout project.

The Board expressed its fundamental need to prioritise and ensure the staff of MARA are adequately cared for with appropriate office accommodation but must ensure it fulfils its duty to adhere to good governance practices and public spending code requirements. The Board instructed the Executive to update the business case reflecting the board's discussion at the Board meeting and present a revised business case for its approval.

Action:

- Executive to revise business case and resubmit to the Board for its approval.

5.3 Update on Reserves Policy

Highlighted that a written resolution process may be required for this matter.

5.4 Update on Scientific/Technical Reference Committee

Confirmed this matter will be presented to the Board at the next meeting.

5.5 Update on Bad and Doubtful Debts Policy

Highlighted that a written resolution process may be required for this matter.

6. Governance Matters

6.1 Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement

The CEO presented a draft agreement to the board noting the requirements for such an agreement under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, and the process of engagement with DECC. A final version of the agreement will be presented to the Board for its approval ahead of signing. Timing most likely Q1 2025.

6.2 2025 Board Work Program - The Board approved the following resolution:

That at its meeting on 3 December 2024, the Board approved the 2025 Board Work Program as attached at agenda item 6.2.

7.0 CEO Report

The CEO focused the Board's attention on the Executive summary, outlining work completed to date. Topics discussed included recruitment, workforce planning, engagement with Coastal Planning Authorities and key risks.

8.0 ARC Report

Concise oral update provided by the ARC Chair with the next ARC meeting scheduled for February 2025. The ARC Chair outlined it will engage with the Executive following recent correspondence that highlighted learnings following recent ARC training.

9.0 Risk Register

The Director of Corporate Affairs gave an overview of the risk register. The Board sought information on the expectation for staffing in the New Year. The CEO detailed the recruitment plans and new starts joining in the coming weeks.

10.0 2025 Budget and Business Plan

Note: RB left the meeting.

The CEO outlined that the budget and business plan were to be read together. The Board enquired about any shortfalls with the Director of Corporate Affairs providing clarification that we are within budget. Further clarification was provided on CSSO, foreshore and FOI/AIE figures and fees. The Board sought further information on objective 1.4 (value for money reviews of foreshore estate rent review process) with the CEO outlining the limitations of this process due to the existing legislative provisions, an alternative approach would be to strengthen the legislation.

The Board approved the following resolution:

That at its meeting on 3 December 2024, the Board approved the 2025 business plan and budget as detailed in the documents attached at agenda item 10.0.

11.0 AOB

The Chair reminded Board members to promote MARA's work on social platforms and conveyed the Board's appreciation to the Executive for their work throughout 2024.

ENDS.