Department of Health
Resource Efficiency Action Plan
2019-2020
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Introduction

The Government Decision of January 2019 on Actions by Departments and Agencies on Single Use Plastics, Prevention of Waste and Green Public Procurement has determined that Government Departments will not purchase single-use plastics, beverage cups, cutlery and drinking straws, directly or indirectly, after 1 January 2019 except where specific public health/hygiene or safety issues arise. The Government Decision also introduced the requirement for Resource Efficiency Action Plans (REAP) to be prepared by Departments.

The Department of Health is actively engaging in measures to improve efficiencies in the context of energy, waste, water and recycling. The Department are active participants in OPW Optimising Power @ Work campaign and continue to pursue and progress energy initiatives across the Department.

As part of the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy (published by DCCAE in January 2017), the Department reports to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on the Public Sector Energy Reporting Programme. Delivery on targets of the Strategy is tasked to a Departmental Energy Team, which is led by the Departmental Energy Performance Officer (at Management Board Level).

This Resource Efficiency Action Plan covers the period 2019 to 2020 and will be reviewed annually. It examines how the Department of Health uses its resources in three key areas – energy, water and waste, and commits to taking specific actions in each of these areas. While there are many simple, low cost, actions we have taken and will continue to take, we must now intensify our efforts as an organisation.

The Department's Green Team and its ongoing employee engagement process will ensure the targets set out in the REAP will be implemented and significantly reduce the environmental impacts of the Department's activities.
Overview of the Department of Health

The Mission of the Department is to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Ireland;

- Keeping people healthy
- Providing the healthcare people need
- Delivering high quality services and getting best value from health system resources

The Department of Health was based in Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2 until July 2018 and our Resource Efficiency at that time was at 25%. According to the Environmental Protection Agency Green Business Tree questionnaire, our overall energy efficiency has improved significantly following our relocation from Hawkins House, to new, modern accommodation in Miesian Plaza, Baggot Street Lower, Dublin 2. Miesian Plaza was the first LEED Platinum\(^1\) v4 Certified building in Ireland. Our Resource Efficiency rating is currently 72%.

Improving resource efficiency requires a combination of behavioural change, which is often low or no cost, and targeted investment in facilities and enabling infrastructure. To date the focus has been on two areas: improving our energy efficiency and better management of our waste. Managing our waste is the area where we have most work to do.

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\(^1\) LEED: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. Please see Irish Green Building Council for further details.
Energy

Overview

The Department has committed to the Public Sector Partnership Programme in conjunction with the Sustainable Energy Authority (SEAI). This partnership enables the Department to access supports from the SEAI, such as project assistance through specialist advisors. Under SEAI partnership, the Department committed to and has followed through on developing a structured Energy Management programme. The Department reports annually on energy efficiency initiatives and savings achieved, through the SEAI Monitoring and Reporting Portal.

Activity to date

The Department of Health is already well advanced in this area as a result of a number of internal Departmental initiatives such as:

- Removal of personal heaters and fans
- Automated power lights in areas of less foot fall

The decommissioning of our previous premises in Hawkins House resulted in our energy consumption being reduced and our energy efficiency improving above the Government target set at 33%.

Miesian Plaza is equipped with a wide range of energy efficient technologies and measures, to minimise its energy footprint. For example, minimised electricity consumption through energy-efficient recessed category 2 lighting and fixtures and automated controls used throughout the building. These measures significantly reduce the building’s energy requirements.
Future actions

- We will continue to participate in the SEAI public sector Monitoring and Reporting and OPW Optimising Power@Work programmes

- We will hold Lunch and Learns to help educate staff on the efficient use of energy

- We will establish a Green Team to further employee engagement and reduce environmental impacts
Transport

Overview

We are currently developing a mechanism for monitoring the carbon impact of Departmental travel. Staff are already required to take public transport where suitable and available, and all foreign travel must be approved by management in advance of booking. All claims for official travel must also be approved in advance by managers. In this way, there is a well-developed system for ensuring that only necessary travel is undertaken, that the number of officers travelling is kept to a minimum and public transport is used where possible.

The Department also has access to two electric vehicle charging points in the car park to facilitate use of electric vehicles by staff.

Future actions

- Staff will be requested to consider the impact their chosen mode of transport and frequency of travel have on the Department’s carbon footprint

- We will undertake a staff survey on how staff commute to work with a view to promoting awareness of more sustainable options

- Staff will be asked to consider other options rather than travelling to meetings e.g. Video Conferencing or Webinars
Restaurant Area & Kitchenettes

Overview

As a Department we fully support and have implemented the Single-Use Plastics (SUPS) and Resource Efficiency initiatives. In conjunction with our canteen service, we eliminated the purchase and use of single-use plastics in Quarter 4 2018 throughout the building. We have further extended our commitment to leadership in this area by ensuring that our restaurant service provider is committed to the same behaviours while also embracing a healthy options policy.

Activity to date

The purchase and use of all single-use plastic cups, packaging and cutlery has been eliminated from the Department and replaced with either recyclable or compostable alternatives. Our current restaurant service provider is the first catering company to achieve a 3-star rating from the Sustainable Restaurant Association for on-site food service. Biodegradable alternatives are sourced and purchased for cutlery, cups, food containers for take away options for staff. This will allow the reduction in waste to land fill of non-compostable materials. We continue to promote measures such as the purchasing of “keep cups” and reusable water bottles for all Departmental staff.

Future actions

- To remove all single use compostable items including cutlery, cups, food containers for take away options for staff and replace with reusable items made from sustainable products.
Waste management

Overview

In Miesian Plaza we are working on and promoting greener public procurement, improving energy efficiency, biodiversity and promoting the circular economy.

Activity to date

In the planning stage of the Department’s move to Miesian Plaza it was decided to remove all desk bins from floors and offices. Centralised recycling bin facilities in the tea stations on each floor were introduced. This has seen a reduction in the purchase, use, and disposal of over 78,000 bin liners being sent to land fill.

- Information signs on recycling and composting over the recycling bins and print stations for staff has raised awareness and promoted behavioural change within the Department.

- Since the move to Miesian Plaza we have reduced the number of printers in use from in excess of 300 to 18. In 2017, the average cost of print consumables per month was €17,000. The latest quarterly cost in 2019 for printing in MP was approx. €25,000. This figure relates to all printing costs for 3 months and not just the consumables costs. The savings made are a considerable amount.

- Replacement of single waste bins in the canteen and kitchenettes of our HQ building with segregated bins for organic waste, recycling and general waste

- No more individual bins in offices

- Multiple recycling points for paper

- Single use plastic beverage and water cups eliminated from the canteen
• All staff provided with a reusable “keep cup”

• To facilitate visitors, compostable cups are available at drink dispensers

• All staff provided with reusable water bottles

• The Department has not purchased single use plastic utensils, plates or straws since the Government Decision of the 3 January 2019.

**Future actions**

In respect of Departmental procurement, whether through Office of Government Procurement or open procurement processes the energy efficiency rating of the product and the life cycle cost will be considered.

• We will undertake a new Resource Efficiency Assessment in 2020
Water

Overview

Water meters are fitted throughout the building which are linked to the Building Management System. Water sustainability and Water Conservation are promoted through the use of a Rainwater Harvesting System. Rain water collection tanks in the basement and variable speed booster pumps can distribute filtered rainwater for WC flushing and irrigation.

Activity to date

All toilets are low-flush and use between 3-4 litres per flush, and as with all handbasins, they are sensor operated which further reduces waste and usage.

Future actions

With the aid of the Green team we will run water conservation awareness campaigns for all staff.
Conclusion – looking beyond 2020

As an organisation, our biggest opportunity to improve our resource efficiency is in educating our staff regarding water conservation, energy saving and waste management. Our HQ in Miesian Plaza is a LEED platinum v4 certified building. It has features such as in-house bike hall and showering facilities to facilitate staff to cycle to work and renewable energy heating to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

Future Action

- Getting the Green team up and running

- Educating staff on ways to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Refuse.
Annex 1

RESOURCE EFFICIENCY RATING HAWKINS HOUSE

Hawkins House Green Business Tree Resource Efficiency Rating 2018
Annex 2

RESOURCE EFFICIENCY RATING MIESIAN PLAZA

Miesian Plaza Green Business Tree Resource Efficiency Rating 2019

Resource Efficiency (RE) Rating

Department of Health

72% (RE) Rating

This is a good RE rating but there is potential to improve and make further savings.

Your RE rating is based on individual ratings which you achieved in the following areas:

- ENERGY: 81%
- WATER: 72%
- WASTE: 67%
- MANAGEMENT: 67%