

Ráiteas Straitéise



March 1999



Foreword

Met Éireann, as the National Meteorological Service, operates in an environment involving several different time-scales. Its operational work is time-critical and bounded by very tight and immediate deadlines; changes in society, in the economic and political climate, and in technology, occur over the course of a few years; while an organisation such as Met Éireann must take a very long-term view of the requirement to maintain a meteorological capability and infrastructure to serve future generations.

It is with the second time-scale that this Strategy Statement is concerned, i.e. the trends over the next 3 to 5 years that will have an impact on Met Éireann and will require a response from the organisation. Identifying the external factors and the readiness of Met Éireann to deal with the challenges posed, as well as defining the strategies that will enable us to provide an even better service to the people of Ireland, is the purpose of this document.

In today's environment, change is a fact of life. In order to remain effective organisations must be capable of responding and adapting quickly to internal pressures and external trends. Inevitably this will involve instigating and driving projects and initiatives which alter the *status quo* - new goals must be set, new structures developed and new processes implemented.

Change on this scale can be successful only if it operates through people and partnership. Management and staff need to become involved in an open, co-operative process aimed at clarifying the need for change, explaining how it will be implemented and ensuring that all personnel are kept fully informed of on-going developments. We must also be conscious of the needs of our customers, so that they too are engaged in the process of consultation and participation. Our objective is to deliver improved value for money to all end-users of our products and services, and to cultivate a greater level of pride and commitment among our staff.

The challenges facing Met Éireann are greater now than ever before. But with a high level of staff involvement, and a clear focus on customers needs, I am confident that we will continue to be seen as a modern, well-motivated organisation supplying a range of useful and valuable services.

Declan Murphy
Director

Brollach

Ní mór do sheirbhís náisiúnta mheitéareolaíochta mar Met Éireann gníomhú ar scálaí éagsúla ama. Bíonn a cuid oibre laethúil ceangailte le spriocamanna cinnte agus le sceidil dochta; caithfidh sí freagairt do athruithe sa tsochaí, sa teicneolaíocht agus i gcursaí eacnamaíochta agus polaitíochta a tharlaíonn le linn tréimhsí de bheagán blianta; maidir leis an riachtanas atá ann cumas agus infrastruchtúr meitéareolaíochta a chaomhnú ar mhaithe leis na glúnta atá le teacht, caithfidh eagraíocht mar Met Éireann dearcadh fad-téarmach a chothú.

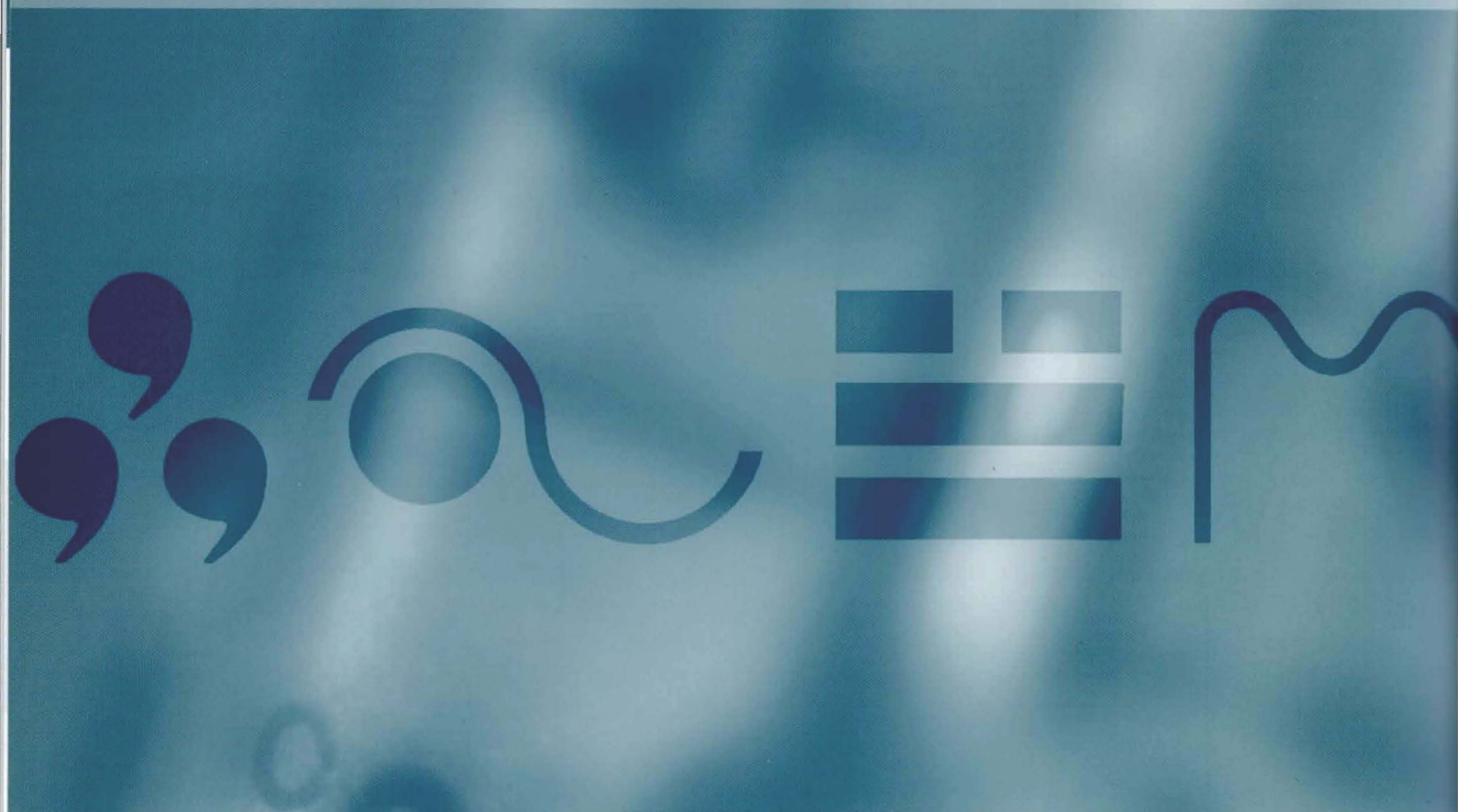
Is leis an tarna scála ama thuas-luaite atá baint ag an Ráiteas Straitéise seo, sé sin leis na hathruithe as seo go ceann 3 nó 5 de bhlianta, a rachaidh i bhfeidhm ar Met Éireann agus lena gcaithfear déileáil. Sé aidhm an doiciméid seo ná na fórsaí seachtaracha a aithint, cumas Met Éireann chun an dúshlán a thabhairt a mheas, agus na staitéisí a aimsiú a chuirfidh ar ár gcumas seirbhís níos fearr ná riamh a chur ar fáil do mhuintir na hÉireann.

Sa lá atá inniu ann caithfear glacadh le síorathrú. Ní mór do eagraíochtaí bheith in ann iad féin a athrú agus freagairt do bhrú inmheánach chomh maith le fórsaí lasmuigh. Ciallaíonn sé seo go gcaithfear tionscnaimh a bhunú agus a thiomáint chun cinn a athróidh stáid na heagraíochta - caithfear spriocanna nua a leagan síos, struchtúir nua a fhorbairt agus modhanna nua oibre a chur i ngníomh.

Ní éireoidh le athrú ar an scála seo mura mbeidh sé bunaithe ar dhaoine agus ar chomhpháirtíocht. Ní mór do lucht bainistíochta agus foirne bheith páirteach i bpróiseas oscailte, comhoibritheach a bhfuil de chuspóir aige a thaispeáint go bhfuil an dul chun cinn riachtanach, a mhíniú cé'n chaoi a dhéanfar é agus a chinntiú go mbeidh gach ball den fhoireann ar an eolas faoi chéard tá ag tarlú. Chomh maith leis sin, caithfimid cuimhneamh ar chéard tá ag teastáil ón ár gcuid custaiméirí, sa chaoi go mbeidh siad siúd freisin páirteach sa phróiseas comhairle. Siad na haidhmeanna atá againn luach airgid níos fearr a thabhairt dóibh siúd a bhaineann úsáid as na hearraí agus na seirbhísí a sholáthraímid agus breis mórtais agus díograise a chothú i measc ár bhfoirne.

Tá dúshlán níos mó ná riamh faoi Met Éireann. Mar sin féin, de bharr ard-leibhéal comhpháirtíochta le lucht oibre agus súil ghéar ar riachtanaisí na gcustaiméirí, tá mé cinnte gur féidir linn seasamh os comhair an tsaoil mar eagraíocht nua-aimseartha, muiníneach a sholáthraíonn raon seirbhísí atá fóinteach agus luachmhar.

Déaglán Ó Murchadha Stiúrthóir



Introduction

The Public Service Management Act (1997) sets out a process of planning and accountability for Government Departments and Offices. Under the terms of the Act, each Department and Office is required to prepare and publish a Strategy Statement at specified intervals. As Met Éireann is a Division of the Department of Public Enterprise, its legal obligations under the Act are met by the Department's Strategy Statement.

However the specialist nature of Met Éireann's functions, the degree of autonomy it is accorded within the Department, and its own commitment to the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) makes it desirable that we produce our own Statement.

In doing so we are building on Met Éireann's previous work within the SMI process (e.g. the first Strategy Statement produced in 1996) and also on the outcome of various working groups and planning procedures which were set up as a direct result of the strategic approach. While the SMI process has already made a significant impact on the organisation, much remains to be done and valuable lessons can be drawn from our experience to date. There is a clear need to propagate the Strategic Management Initiative to all parts of the organisation, to have in place adequate monitoring procedures and to communicate effectively with all staff. A perception of unsatisfactory progress has sometimes resulted, in part at least, from a failure to demonstrate linkages between events in Met Éireann and the wider SMI project, and also from a failure to formally review and communicate results.

Met Éireann has a corps of skilled and talented staff imbued with a strong sense of commitment to the public good and of loyalty to the organisation and to their colleagues. In facing the challenges posed by the external environment and in setting an agenda to meet future change, we have a very sound foundation on which to build. As we approach the new millennium, it is clear that Met Éireann's continued success will demand vision, courage, flexibility and a willingness to move where necessary from dearly-held positions. While the requirements of the nation for weather services are ongoing, and a long-term view must be maintained, the manner in which these requirements are met must adapt to changing circumstances.

Part 1 of this Statement contains an analysis of the environment in which Met Éireann operates and of its internal strengths and weaknesses. Part 2 considers how the organisation should adapt to rapidly-changing social and economic conditions, and focuses in particular on the need to deliver a quality service to all customers. It sets out high level objectives and identifies detailed strategies and actions which will be pursued. Critical success factors are defined for each strategy. Monitoring and review mechanisms are laid out and performance indicators, in specific detail where possible, are listed.

The Strategy Statement will be followed by Met Éireann's Corporate Business Plan for the years 1999-2001. Divisional Plans, in sufficient detail to enable each individual member of staff to identify his/her personal challenge, will then be produced. Priority will be given to ensuring meaningful and effective staff participation at all stages of this Corporate Planning cycle.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to meet the national requirement for high-quality weather forecasts and associated services, with optimum efficiency and value for money.

Sé an misean atá againn freastal ar riachtanaisí na tíre maidir le réamhfhaisnéisí aimsire d'ard-chaighdeán agus seirbhísí gaolmhara eile, agus é sin a dhéanamh go héifeachtach ag tabhairt luach maith ar airgead.

Mandate

The Mission Statement implies that we, as the National Meteorological Service, will

- * help to ensure the protection and safety of life and property by issuing public weather forecasts and warnings
- * contribute effectively to national prosperity and to Government objectives by supplying relevant meteorological services to all sectors of the economy
- * ensure customer satisfaction by carefully analysing end-user feedback, and by continually improving the range and quality of our forecasts, the cost-effectiveness of our operations and our overall standard of service
- * foster a professional and supportive work environment which attracts, retains and develops committed employees
- * ensure the maintenance of a high-quality and cost-effective meteorological infrastructure, consistent with national requirements and resources
- * meet the State's obligations to provide meteorological services to the aviation sector
- * enhance the quality of our climatological archives and provide easy and effective access to our databases
- * participate in the on-going development of meteorological science and its applications in collaboration with our European partners and with the wider international community
- * contribute to the effective monitoring and good management of the natural environment.



Analysis of the External Environment

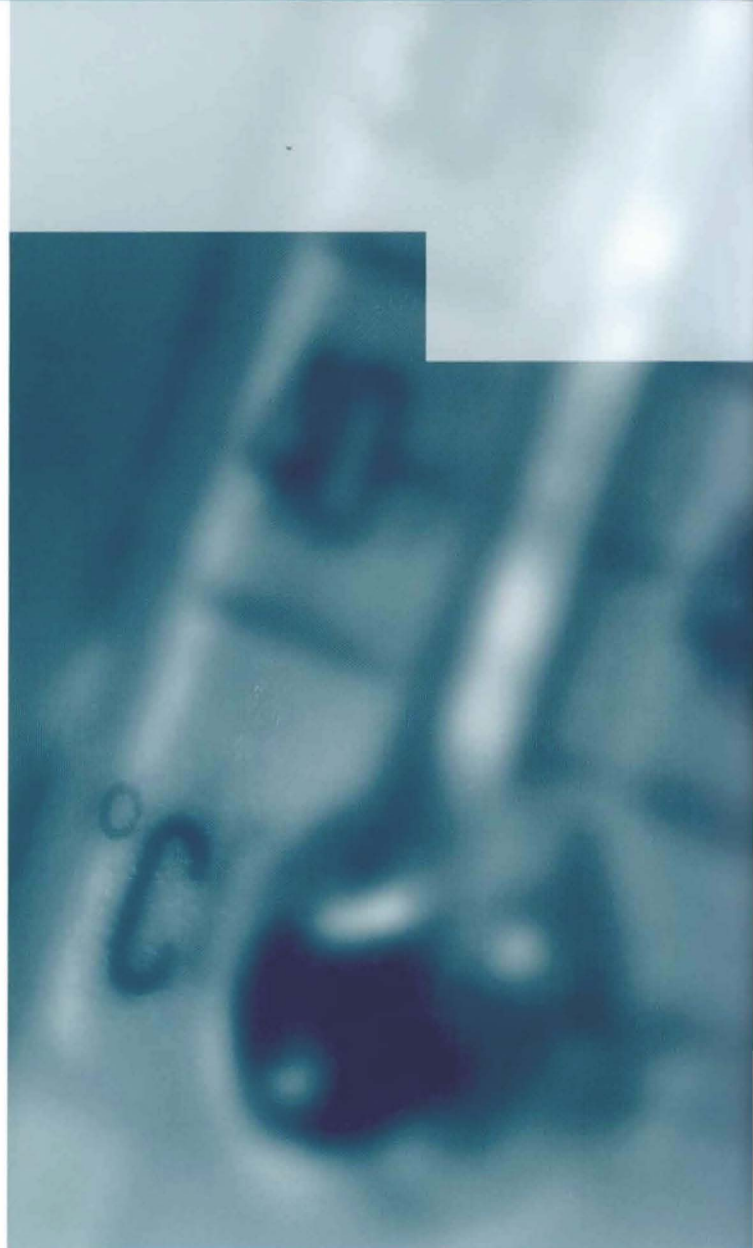
There are several features of the external environment which will have a direct bearing on Met Éireann's future operations.

Public Awareness and Increase in Demand

Recent years have seen a growing public awareness of the importance of high-quality weather forecasts - not only in situations where life and property may be at risk, but in a broad range of social and economic activities. In particular there is a greater realisation that accurate and timely weather information can enhance the profitability of a wide range of commercial enterprises.

Among the issues which have led to this heightened awareness are:

- * notable weather events such as flooding and storms.
- * the growing consensus on the likelihood of climate change because of increased greenhouse gas emissions.
- * ozone depletion.
- * general concern over environmental issues.
- * not least the steady increase in the quality of weather forecasts due to advances in meteorological science and in technology.



The Pace of Technological Change

On-going advances in technology continue to have a major impact on meteorology. Many aspects of meteorological production systems - including weather observing networks (on land, sea, in the upper atmosphere and in space), data processing and forecasting methods - have been enhanced by new technology or become more efficient through its application.

The ever-greater power of modern computers has facilitated the development and application of sophisticated models of the atmosphere. The consequent improvements in Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP) have resulted in more accurate forecasts and in extended forecast range.

Developments in communications technology have had a dramatic impact on operational meteorology. There is growing customer demand for new delivery systems such as the Internet, which can provide forecast data to end-users from virtually anywhere in the world.

The current and anticipated growth in the number of television channels, and especially the introduction of digital television, means that a greatly increased choice of general 'broad brush' forecasts covering Ireland will be available to the Irish public.

Impact of Competition Law

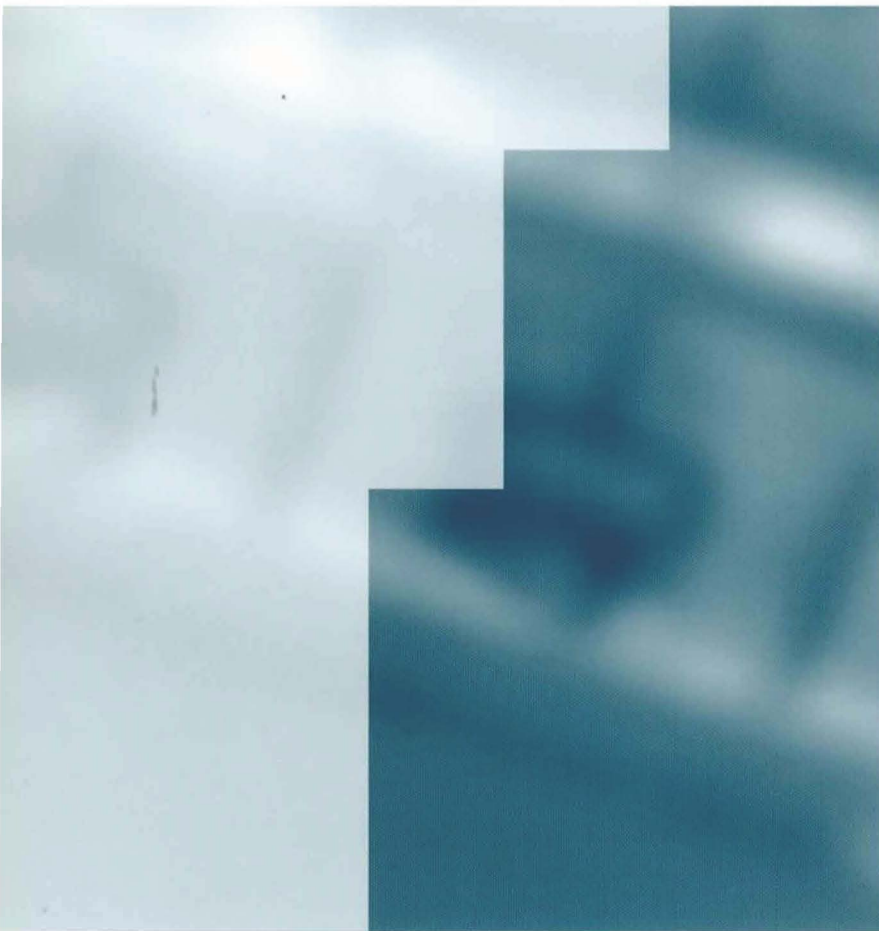
The National Meteorological Services (NMSs) of western Europe have developed to a generally comparable standard of competence and each provides services to meet a broadly similar range of requirements. Up to recently they have confined their activities to their own territories and to the high seas, and have not provided services in the territories of other countries. This arrangement reflected the interdependence of NMSs -in order to carry out their functions they needed to share weather data on a global basis.

In recent years several factors have combined to bring about a change in relationships between the European NMSs. These include the much-improved accuracy of weather forecasts, which has prompted many NMSs

to exploit their commercial potential, and also the requirements of European Union competition law and national competition laws.

The National Meteorological Services have moved from a policy of non-competition with each other to a system whereby European customers are free to choose a service from any of the NMSs that can supply it. The interdependence of the NMSs and the common ownership of the international data-sets are protected by a revenue-sharing arrangement organised through ECOMET, a Brussels-based Economic Interest Group. In compliance with competition law, the new arrangement provides for access to the data-sets by the private meteorological sector.

Within the European Union, competition law and the growth of private sector meteorology continue to raise questions about the commercial role of NMSs. To date, the predominant attitude of EU governments has been to maintain the legitimacy of the NMSs' involvement in commercial activity for the primary purpose of easing the burden on the public exchequer. The need to establish a level playing field with the private sector has been recognised at all times, along with the requirement to demonstrate by transparent accounting procedures the absence of cross-subsidisation. The debate within some countries has led to a more radical approach. In the Netherlands, for example, it has recently been decided that the commercial activities of their National Meteorological Service should be privatised.



Involvement of Private Sector Meteorological Companies

A feature of the past five years has been the growing engagement of private sector firms in the provision, on a commercial basis, of such meteorological services as can generate a profitable return. Examples are services to the media, premium-rate telephone services and forecasts for offshore exploration.

The raw material for such forecasts - i.e. the basic weather reports and the outputs of computer-based atmospheric models - are available at relatively low charge to the private sector.

International Co-operation

Driven by the pressures on their resources and by a growing tendency to seek international solutions to common problems, the European NMSs have strengthened their co-operative structures by the creation of EUMETNET. This provides a loose framework within which suitable areas for joint action can be identified and addressed.

Pooling of resources and avoiding duplication of effort are the motivating factors behind this development.

The involvement of the European NMSs in commercial activities has the potential to weaken the high level of co-operation that has traditionally existed between them. So far however there is little evidence of any adverse consequences. On the wider international front, tension between the United States and Europe on the issue of meteorological data exchange policy may pose greater difficulties.

Pressures on the Meteorological Infrastructures

The provision of raw meteorological data - weather observations, NWP model output etc. - remains a central task of the NMSs. While technological advances have enabled significant efficiencies to be achieved in some of these production processes, the costs associated with other developments (e.g. meteorological satellites, radar systems) are extremely high. An undue concentration on the commercial potential of meteorological products can sometimes mask the huge investment necessary to maintain vital infrastructural systems - on which all meteorological activities, whether public service or commercial, are critically dependent. Under current arrangements, funding for such investment must be found within the budgets of the NMSs.

Response to the External Environment

All of the issues outlined above have an impact on Met Éireann. How does the organisation perceive them and propose to respond? What particular opportunities and threats do we face?

Opportunities

- * Growth in demand and greater public awareness result in a higher profile for Met Éireann, leading to new revenue-earning opportunities.
- * Increased competition provides motivation for the organisation and can help to achieve a stronger sense of team spirit.
- * The availability to customers of weather data from other sources (e.g. the Internet) offers Met Éireann the possibility of selecting priority areas on which to concentrate in pursuance of its mandate.
- * Greater cost-effectiveness, better quality products and a wider range of service delivery systems will result from ongoing technological advances.
- * The strengthening co-operation between European NMSs will help Met Éireann maintain and extend its skills base, and promote optimum use of resources.
- * New arrangements between the European NMSs offer possibilities of exploiting markets abroad.
- * The reforms underway in the Civil Service will enhance Met Éireann's ability to face future challenges.

Threats

- * Commercial competition may lead to an over-concentration by all players on the profitable segments of the market, and put pressure on resources for essential infrastructure and public services. Naturally the private sector will focus exclusively on profit-making areas - whereas Met Éireann, while eager to exploit appropriate commercial opportunities, must always give priority to its public sector obligations.
- * European Union directives and regulations in areas such as copyright, data protection and competition law will have an increasing impact on Met Éireann.
- * The general pressure on state resources will continue to pose problems for infrastructural investment.
- * Maintaining and developing operational systems will pose a major challenge in view of the ever-faster pace of technological change. Civil Service procedures, with their proper emphasis on accountability and transparency, tend to be slower and less flexible than those available to the private sector.
- * The challenge of Year 2000 compliance faces Met Éireann as it does all organisations.
- * Private companies, and indeed foreign NMSs, will compete in Ireland for niche markets (e.g. media services). Many such organisations benefit from economies of scale not available to Met Éireann.

Analysis of the Internal Environment

Organisational Issues

While Met Éireann is a line Division of the Department of Public Enterprise, it operates in practice with a considerable measure of autonomy, somewhat akin to an executive agency within the Department. Its legal standing derives solely from an order made under the Ministers and Secretaries Act (1924) and from its role in fulfilling various international commitments on behalf of the State. Met Éireann therefore lacks a robust legal framework and this can be a source of difficulty, particularly in relation to the definition of its public sector and commercial functions. There is a need for Met Éireann to clarify its public sector obligations; it is important that services for which the State takes direct responsibility be differentiated from those for which Met Éireann can compete on a commercial basis with the private sector.

Given Met Éireann's mixed public service/commercial commitments, the issue of its most appropriate organisational status inevitably arises. This matter has already been the subject of discussion within the Department and efforts will continue to achieve for Met Éireann an organisational status appropriate to its modern role.

Within the context of the British-Irish Agreement, Met Éireann looks forward to further development of existing friendly relationships with the Northern Ireland branch of the UK Meteorological Office. Enhanced co-operation in the planning and delivery of services should lead to tangible benefits for customers throughout Ireland.

Funding Issues

Met Éireann receives an allocation within the overall Vote of the Department of Public Enterprise. In recent years an 'Administrative Budget' agreement between the Secretary-General of the Department and the Director of Met Éireann has resulted in the organisation acquiring greater autonomy and discretion in financial matters.

Revenue accrues to Met Éireann in two streams: (1) from meteorological services to civil aviation, the costs of which are recovered through the en-route charges mechanism of EUROCONTROL and (2) through normal commercial activities such as services to the media, premium-rate telephone services etc. In general all revenue is paid into Appropriations-in-Aid, while the costs of commercial activity are drawn from the Administrative Budget subheads; this makes transparent accounting and the determination of profit more difficult. Under the internal Administrative Budget arrangement some small portion of revenue (corresponding to 50% of the excess over an agreed annual target figure) may be retained, but in general the incentive to maximise revenue is weak.

Revenue from civil aviation is based on cost recovery only, and in recent years has fallen in real terms because of staff reductions and to a lesser extent because of reaction to pressure from the aviation community to reduce costs.

Commercial revenue has climbed steadily and at the end of 1997 stood at just under £700,000, representing an average annual increase over the past three years of about 10%.

Staff numbers are principally determined by financial allocations, and given the need to achieve efficiency dividends overall numbers have fallen in recent years. While Met Éireann, in common with other sections of the Civil Service, must continue to explore all opportunities for further efficiencies, the scope for any additional overall staff reductions is extremely limited. Considerations of effectiveness, morale etc. require that the organisation should retain some capacity to respond to increased demand for services and exploit new commercial opportunities.

Among the specific difficulties facing Met Éireann with regard to funding are:

- * The incentive to earn more revenue is weak because almost all revenue is treated as Appropriations-in-Aid and is not available for re-investment. The result is that expenditure on profitable activity represents a drain on general financial resources.
- * The current financial budget precludes the possibility of recruiting additional staff to meet new challenges or even to engage in demonstrably profitable activities.
- * It is difficult to accommodate abnormal demands on the capital budget, given the flat profile of allocations.
- * Costs in Met Éireann are probably higher than in private companies.
- * There is a growing need to demonstrate transparency in commercial operations and an absence of cross-subsidisation from public service activity. Current financial management systems are not suitable for this purpose.

Human Resource Issues

Met Éireann operates in a real-time environment, delivering a wide range of products to an ever-growing customer base. Robust and well-proven systems are essential for handling such time-critical tasks as:

- * Making weather observations.
- * Collecting and processing large volumes of national and international data.
- * Generating weather forecasts (numerical and manual).
- * Delivering end products to customers.

For some time past improved technology, along with the reduction in personnel numbers dictated by government policy, have necessitated significant changes in work practices, and staff have re-adjusted with commendable flexibility.

Over the coming years, technological innovation will continue to influence Met Éireann's operations, as will the broader organisational changes taking place throughout the Civil Service. These developments will pose many challenges for management and staff.

Within Met Éireann, the importance of the operational units is clearly evident. No less significant is the support role of areas such as information technology, meteorological instrumentation, research, marketing and administration. These latter functions have grown in importance for a whole variety of reasons - the growing dependence on technology, greater competition, increased autonomy in financial and personnel matters, greater involvement

in international activity and the need to ensure that professional skills and competencies remain up to date. An ongoing difficulty is the need to achieve the most effective staff deployment, while operating humane policies with regard to the social consequences of transferring personnel from one location to another.

Some of the particular human resource issues facing Met Éireann are:

- * There are difficulties in responding to increased demand for services, due to lack of scope in staff numbers.
- * The distribution of staff at many widely-separated locations restricts opportunities for re-deployment.
- * Staff training and development has received insufficient priority over recent years. The Training Needs Analysis project, completed in 1998, reflects a growing awareness of the importance of this issue.
- * Notwithstanding the general flexibility shown by all staff, the existence of separate grading structures for Meteorologist, Meteorological Officer and Clerical personnel may create difficulties. These in turn can affect costs and exclude some options for increased efficiency.
- * Internal delegation of financial and other authority is not well advanced.



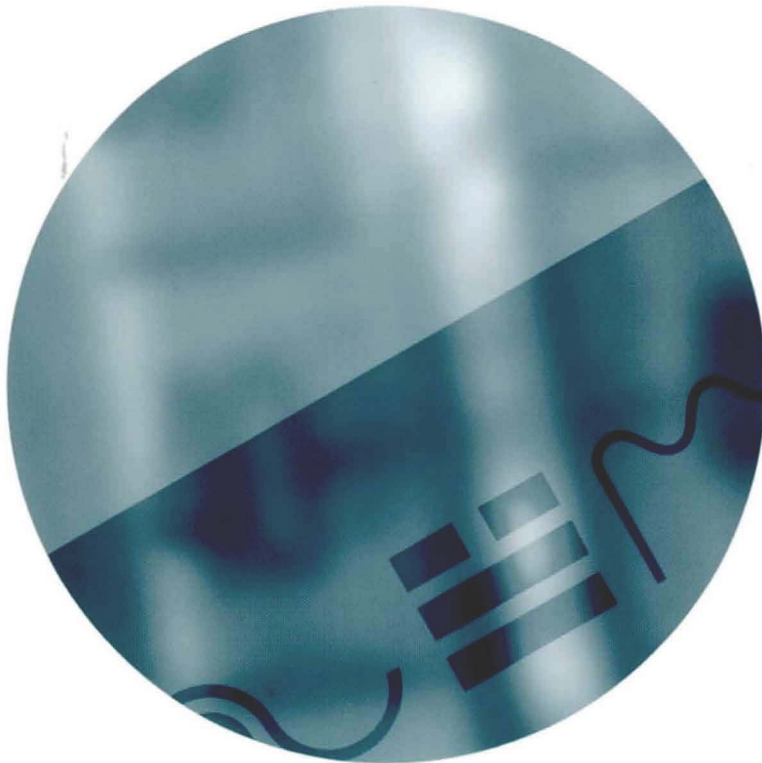
Products and Services

The wide range of products and services which a National Meteorological Service must provide, along with increasing customer demand for services of all kinds, poses particular challenges for Met Éireann. Economies of scale available to much larger NMSs do not apply, and the decline in staff numbers is an additional constraint.

Effective and imaginative use of modern technology will play a key role in helping Met Éireann to meet its commitments - in updating services, devising new products and generally keeping abreast of best practice. To date, the organisation has been able to respond adequately to most customer demands, but there have been cases where private competition has secured business by having a more complete and integrated solution to a customer's needs. The fact is that Met Éireann's investment in developing new techniques and products is below a desirable level, and inevitably a policy of *ad hoc* reaction to particular demands tends to prevail.

A matter requiring particular attention is the quality control of products issued to end users. Currently a range of statistical scores is used to monitor the accuracy of computerised Numerical Weather Prediction output, and the skill of some end user products in both the aviation and general forecasting areas is also assessed. More needs to be done, however, as the verification of product quality is a fundamental component in the delivery of high-calibre customer service.

- * There have been several useful initiatives in improving communications within the organisation. Nonetheless, given the dispersed nature of Met Éireann, and the prevalence of shiftwork, it remains difficult to achieve adequate levels of dialogue and consultation with all staff.
- * Met Éireann lacks an adequate performance management system.
- * The slow recruitment process causes delays in engaging new staff, often resulting in overtime payments or in delays to projects.

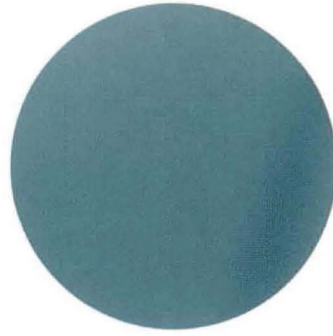


Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

In summary Met Éireann's strengths may be characterised as

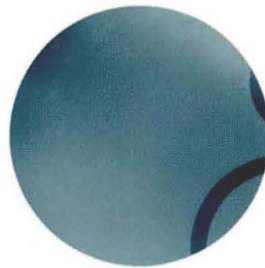
- * Highly-qualified, experienced and committed staff.
- * High level of acceptance and goodwill with the public.
- * Good technical expertise and effective use of modern technology in many areas.
- * Strong linkages with other European meteorological institutes.
- * All relevant functions (scientific, technical, financial, commercial etc.) integrated within a single management structure.

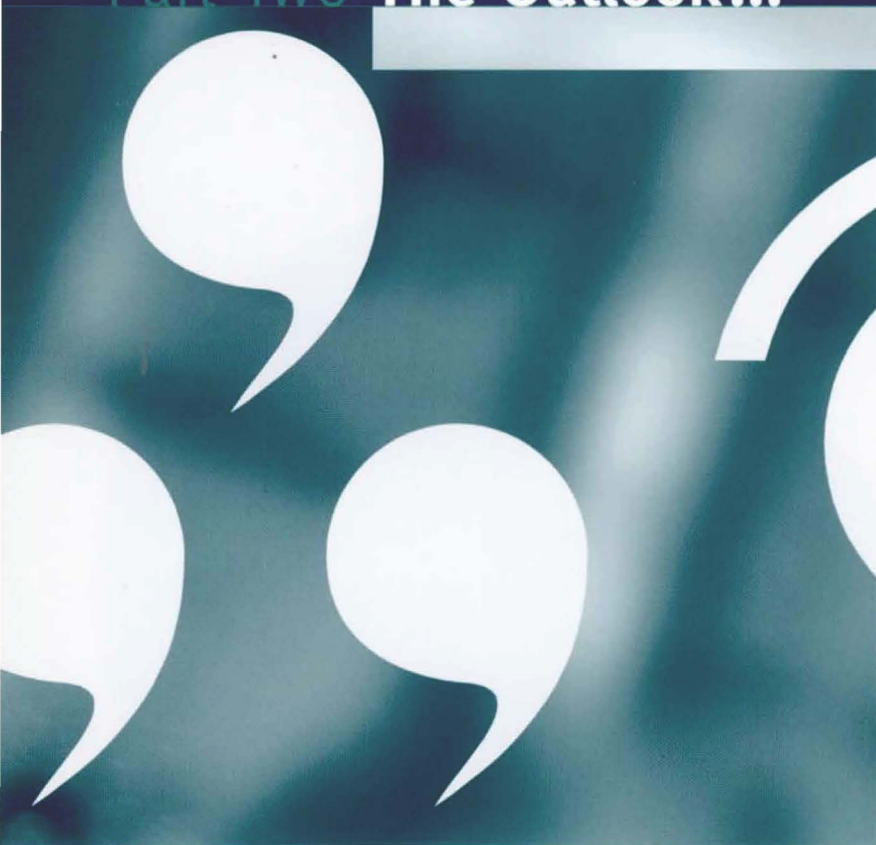


Weaknesses

Some of the main weaknesses affecting Met Éireann are

- * Lack of legal clarity as to its role; lack of an authoritative statement as to its public service obligations.
- * While demands on Met Éireann are as wide in scope as those on larger meteorological institutes, it cannot avail of economies of scale to the same extent.
- * Met Éireann's commercial activities are inhibited by the Civil Service's financial and administrative procedures, which were not devised to meet such requirements. Under current budgetary arrangements the profit incentive is weak.
- * Staff resources are overstretched and the support functions such as technology, product development, marketing and administration are under particular strain.
- * The dispersed nature of Met Éireann means that flexibility in re-deploying staff in response to changing priorities is somewhat limited.
- * Training and development have not been accorded adequate priority.
- * Most European meteorological services have strong synergistic linkages to national universities and other third-level educational institutes. Met Éireann lacks this advantage, as there is no Department of Meteorology in any Irish university.





Introduction

The issues arising from the environmental analysis were identified in Part One. The strategies to be followed by Met Éireann as a considered response to those issues, and as a programme for achieving its mandate in the new millennium, are now discussed.

The operational nature of Met Éireann's activities, and the need to maintain efficient production systems, means that any discretion in the allocation of resources is extremely limited. Nevertheless there are priorities to be set and choices to be made. Any temptation to concentrate solely on day-to-day issues must be resisted; it is essential to maintain a longer-term view of the organisation's objectives, priorities and methods. Met Éireann needs to avail fully of the opportunities provided by technological developments and by the talents of its staff. While most innovations may be viewed as natural extensions of current practice, the prospect of more radical change must also be entertained.

As outlined previously in this document, there are financial and human resource constraints which tend to impair the effectiveness of Met Éireann's operations. In any view of the future, the issue of resources will be of paramount importance - but it must not be allowed to become an insurmountable obstacle. Strategies for tackling resource issues in a manner consistent with the overriding objectives of efficiency and value for money can and must be pursued.

The high-level objective of achieving a net transfer of staff from the operational/production areas to the support/development functions, outlined in Met Éireann's first Strategy Statement, has so far not been achieved to any significant extent. All savings made in the former areas have been offset by the efficiency dividend. This goal of achieving an appropriate balance in staff deployment must be pursued more energetically; it is essential that progress be made, while at the same time operating a humane people management policy.

It is evident that the support and involvement of all staff, at every level of the organisation, will be essential if the tasks confronting Met Éireann are to be tackled successfully. In this regard the commitment of the Government under Partnership 2000 to participative structures meets the dual requirement of (1) staff desire for greater input and consultation and (2) organisational benefit through fully harnessing the talents of all personnel. The strategies for the period 1999-2001 will emphasise delegation and devolution within the organisation, and a broad-based partnership approach.

Met Éireann's strategy, as set out below, is presented in a layered manner beginning with the high-level, governing objectives and proceeding to a more detailed exposition of particular plans and actions. Provision is also made for monitoring and review of progress.

Previous experience with SMI has underlined the importance of good internal communication systems. Staff must be kept as fully informed as possible on the overall progress of Met Éireann's strategic process, on modifications to particular plans and on the outcome of monitoring and review procedures.

High Level Objectives

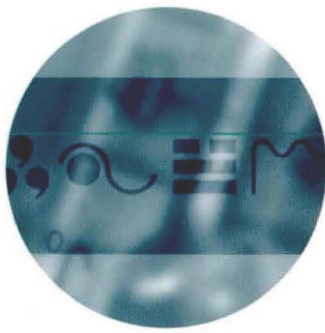
Following on Met Éireann's mandate and the environmental analysis, the high level objectives for the next three years are:

- * To provide a comprehensive range of high-quality meteorological services to the Irish people and to all sectors of the Irish economy.
- * To ensure the long-term sustainability of meteorological services in Ireland through adequate infrastructural investment.
- * To help reduce public exchequer costs by engaging in profitable commercial activities, while maintaining a constructive relationship with the private sector and always conforming fully with competition law.
- * To obtain optimum benefit from developments in meteorological science by prudent utilisation of modern technology, by a well-focused research programme and by collaboration with relevant bodies.
- * To utilise fully the talents and potential of all staff by pursuing a humane and effective human resource policy, and by according high priority to training, communications and participation.
- * To examine the current clerical, technical and professional grade structures with a view to matching individual skills to work requirements, and to promoting overall staffing flexibility.

Aidhmeanna Ard-Leibhéal

Ag éirí as cuspóirí údaraithe Met Éireann agus as anailís na timpeallachta, siad na haidhmeanna ard-leibhéal i gcaitheamh na dtí bliana seo chugainn ná:

- * Réimse cuimsitheach seirbhísí meitéareolaíochta d'ard-chaighdeán a chur ar fáil do phobal na hÉireann agus do gach earnáil d'eacnamaíocht na tíre.
- * Buaine na seirbhísí meitéareolaíochta in Éirinn a chinntiú tré infheistíocht chuí sa bhunstruchtúr.
- * Cabhrú chun costaisí Stáit a laghdú tré bheith páirteach i ngníomhaíocht thráchtála a ghnóthóidh brabach; ag an am céanna, caidreamh cuiditheach a choinneáil ar bun leis an earnáil phríomháideach agus cloí go hiomlán leis an dlí i dtaoibh iomaíochta tráchtála.
- * Barr leasa a bhaint as dul chun cinn na heolaíochta meitéareolaí tré theicneolaíocht nua-aimseartha a usáid go ciallmhar, tré phlean dea-dhírthe taighde agus tré chomhoibriú le eagraíochtaí oiriúnacha.
- * Polasaí daonnachtúil, éifeachtach a chleachtadh i dtaoibh achmhainní daonna agus béim a chur ar chursaí teagaisc, caidrimh agus comhpháirtíochta ar mhaithe le leas iomlán a bhaint as tréithe agus cumas na foirne go léir.
- * Struchtúr na ngrád cléiriúil, teicniúil agus proifisiúnta a iniúchadh d'fhonn scileanna pearsanta agus riachtanaisí oibre a chur le chéile go hoiriúnach agus solúbthacht fóirne a chur chun cinn.



Strategies

The high level objectives will be achieved by the following strategies:

- * The range and quality of Met Éireann's services will be enhanced through the effective exploitation of modern technology and by keeping abreast of new developments in meteorological science and its applications.

Critical Success Factor: Maintaining scientific standards through appropriate training/ development programmes and through familiarisation with best practice elsewhere.

Critical Success Factor: Deployment of sufficient human resources to the task.

Critical Success Factor: Achieving full Year 2000 compliance of systems.

- * The quality and long-term viability of the meteorological infrastructure will be assured through an adequate ongoing investment programme. Enhanced information technology capability and the application of technology to weather observing systems will be the main priorities.

Critical Success Factor: Sufficient prioritisation of human and financial resources to enable significant progress to be made.

- * The Customer Service Plan, including the provision of a World Wide Web site, will be implemented. Particular attention will be paid to measuring the quality of forecasts issued to end-users, in order to highlight and remedy any weaknesses.

Critical Success Factor: Commitment of management and staff.

- * Met Éireann will formulate proposals for its future status within the overall Public Service framework, aimed at addressing the weaknesses and threats already identified. More appropriate arrangements to meet the State's obligations in relation to public sector meteorological services will be devised.

Critical Success Factor: Effective application of experience in similar situations.

- * More effective use of human resources in Met Éireann will be achieved by greater investment in training, including the design and implementation of a new Training Programme.

Critical Success Factor: Prudent use of the outcome of Met Éireann's Training Needs Analysis exercise.

- * Additional advances in human resource management will include implementation of a performance management system and greater delegation of authority within the organisation.

Critical Success Factor: Constructive relationship between unions and management in the spirit of Partnership 2000.

- * Progress will be made on harmonising the grading structures within Met Éireann, in consultation with the staff associations.

Critical Success Factor: A willingness on all sides to examine current grade structures with a view to matching individual skills to work requirements.



- * Opportunities for increased co-operation with other National Meteorological Services over the whole range of common activities will be exploited, both within the framework of EUMETNET and otherwise. The possibility of developing stronger links with Irish academic and research institutes will be actively explored.

Critical Success Factor: Pro-active approach to identifying and promoting co-operation possibilities.

- * Co-operation with other Government Departments and State Agencies will be strengthened, in order to enhance Met Éireann's contribution to Government programmes and to optimise the utilisation of national resources.

Critical Success Factor: Development of closer contacts with relevant bodies.

- * Met Éireann will explore opportunities to build on existing friendly relationships with the Northern Ireland branch of the UK Meteorological Office.

Critical Success Factor: Ongoing communication and co-operation.

- * Commercial activities will focus on those market segments which are likely to yield greatest profit, or which are of primary importance in carrying out Met Éireann's mandate. The communications media (especially those with national coverage) constitute a particularly important sector.

Critical Success Factor: Prioritisation of effort, quality of assessment of opportunities and effective marketing.

- * In consultation with the Secretary-General of the Department, Met Éireann will examine present internal Administrative Budget arrangements as they relate to commercial revenue, with a view to strengthening the organisation's incentive to exploit profitable commercial opportunities.

Critical Success Factor: Imaginative yet realistic approach to devising solutions.

- * Met Éireann's capability to deliver services to the communications media in a wide range of modern presentational formats will be enhanced.

Critical Success Factor: Utilisation of up-to-date graphics and communications technology.

Customer Interests and Customer Service

Met Éireann's customer base is very broad, and includes among many others the general public, airline companies, farmers, mariners, commercial interests and the communications media. The State itself, and the State in the guise of various Government Departments, is also a customer in that it mandates Met Éireann to provide a range of essential services.

The customer requirements supplied by Met Éireann include high quality weather forecasts, a range of climatological services, and various sets of environmental and geophysical data. Dealing effectively with the State's international commitments in relation to meteorology is also a 'customer' requirement.

In November 1997 Met Éireann published its Customer Service Plan, aimed at further improving the quality of its products and services. The highlights of the plan are:

- * A renewed determination to observe the highest standards of courtesy and professionalism when dealing with customers.
- * A new Customer Liaison Panel, which will provide a means for customers to play an active role in planning and monitoring services.
- * A new Staff Customer Service Panel, to enable staff and management jointly to review and improve all aspects of customer relations.
- * A comprehensive Training Needs Analysis which will address training requirements in customer service skills.
- * Regular publication of verification scores, showing the level of accuracy of our forecasts.
- * New explicit standards for delivery of Met Éireann services, covering general forecasting, aviation forecasting and climatological services.
- * New product presentation formats and delivery systems to match customer requirements.
- * The nomination of a Customer Liaison Officer, whose responsibilities will include handling customer complaints.

Met Éireann aims to implement the Customer Service Plan in the period up to 2000.

Cross-Departmental Issues

Met Éireann maintains linkages with a number of Government Departments and Offices. These include:

- * Departments which are direct users of its services, e.g. the Department of Defence, where the Defence Forces (principally the Air Corps and Naval Service) use weather forecasts in their operations.
- * Departments which have a responsibility for weather-sensitive segments of the economy, e.g. Department of Agriculture and Food, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources.
- * Departments whose own Mandate overlaps to some extent that of Met Éireann. The Department of the Environment and Local Government is the principal example, and especially the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Met Éireann's main priority with regard to cross-Departmental issues is to maintain effective communication channels, so that opportunities to synchronise and harmonise activities are identified and exploited. For example, closer structural linkages with the EPA are currently being developed, partly with the aim of ensuring that Met Éireann can contribute effectively to the EPA's national air quality strategy.

Implementation

The implementation of the strategic process involves translating the goals and plans of the Strategy Statement into action programmes at organisational, divisional and individual level. Following adoption of this Strategy Statement, Met Éireann will proceed to:

- * Produce a Corporate Business Plan which will detail explicit actions and targets.
- * Develop, in consultation with staff, detailed action-oriented Divisional Plans within the overall context of the Corporate Business Plan.
- * Utilise the Divisional Plans to identify goals and challenges for individual staff members.

In accordance with the procedures laid down in the Public Service Management Act, new Strategy Statements will be prepared on a three-year cycle (more frequently if circumstances dictate).

Review and Performance Indicators

A review group, drawn from a cross-section of staff, will be established to monitor the overall effectiveness of Met Éireann's strategic planning process, and advise on future strategies and plans. In addition, the following explicit Performance Indicators will be used to measure progress:

- * Implementation of specific aspects of the Customer Service Plan.
- * Growth in customer base.
- * Increase in commercial revenue.
- * Realistic measurements of the accuracy of forecasts.
- * Level of complaints or favourable comments received from customers.
- * Implementation of an agreed capital investment programme.
- * Degree of success in dealing with Year 2000 compliance issues.
- * Level of increase in the training budget and in the number of training days.

Glossary

SMI - Strategic Management Initiative

NWP - Numerical Weather Prediction

NMS - National Meteorological Service

ECOMET - European Co-operation in Meteorology

EUMETNET - European Meteorological Network

EUROCONTROL - European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation

EPA - Environmental Protection Agency



Met Éireann
The Irish Meteorological Service

Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9, Ireland
Cnoc Ghlas Naíon, Baile Átha Cliath 9, Éire
Tel +353-1-806 4200 Fax +353-1-806 4247