



An Coimisiún  
um Rialáil Fóntais  
**Commission for  
Regulation of Utilities**

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# Environmental and Sustainability Initiatives in CRU

## Report to Minister Bruton

### Information Paper

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## **CRU Mission Statement**

The CRU's mission is to protect the public interest in Water, Energy and Energy Safety.

The CRU is guided by four strategic priorities that sit alongside the core activities we undertake to deliver on the public interest. These are:

- Deliver sustainable low-carbon solutions with well-regulated markets and networks
- Ensure compliance and accountability through best regulatory practice
- Develop effective communications to support customers and the regulatory process
- Foster and maintain a high-performance culture and organisation to achieve our vision

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## **1. Overview of CRU's Energy and Sustainability Policy**

The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) is Ireland's independent energy and water regulator. The CRU was established in 1999 and now has a wide range of economic, customer protection and safety responsibilities in energy. The CRU is also the regulator of Ireland's public water and wastewater system.

The CRU's primary economic responsibilities in energy cover electricity generation, electricity and gas networks, and electricity and gas supply activities. The overall aim of the CRU's economic role is to protect the interests of energy customers. The CRU has an important related function in customer protection by resolving complaints that customers have with energy companies.

The CRU's core focus in safety is to protect lives and property across a range of areas in the energy sector. In 2014 the CRU was appointed as Ireland's economic regulator of the Irish public water and wastewater sector.

The energy and water sectors in Ireland are critical to the well-being of citizens and the health of the economy. As such, they will play a crucial role as Ireland's transition to a sustainable, low carbon future. The CRU is committed to playing its role to help deliver a secure, low carbon future as least cost. We are committed to a co-operative approach with stakeholders to ensure safe outcomes, sustainability (including environmental and economic), reliability and efficiency across the sectors we regulate.

In 2010, the CRU established an Energy Efficiency Team (EET). The primary focus of the Team was to promote energy awareness in the workplace and drive reductions in energy consumption year on year. The CRU participates in the SEAI's Public Sector Programme "The Public Sector Energy Partnership" aimed at the achievement of energy efficiency (reduction) targets across the public sector by 2020.

More recently in 2019, in line with our strategic priority of delivering sustainable, low-carbon solutions the CRU has challenged itself to wider objectives around environmental and economic sustainability. These objectives are set out in the CRU's Energy and Sustainability Policy which was adopted by the Commission in February 2019. A copy of the Policy is attached in Appendix 1. The internal group responsible for developing the CRU's energy and sustainability programme, for monitoring and improving its effectiveness and reporting on its results has replaced the EET and is known as The Green Machine.

## 2. Outline of CRU's environmental and sustainability initiatives

The overall objective of the CRU's Energy and Sustainability policy is to reduce the environmental impact of the CRU's activities, in particular as regards our management of energy, water and waste. The scope of activities covers energy use, water use, waste management, procurement of goods and services, transport and travel, and environmental and sustainability awareness among staff.

The CRU offices are in Tallaght, Dublin 24. The offices are leased and spread over four floors, with three floors comprising open plan offices accommodating just over 100 staff and the ground floor comprising shared meeting rooms.

Information on completed, ongoing and planned initiatives in each of the six areas set out in the scope of activities is presented below.

### 2.1 Energy Use

At the end of 2017, the CRU had achieved an overall reduction in energy consumption of 59.2% compared to the baseline level in 2009 (Public Sector Energy Efficiency Performance Report, 2018). Preliminary results to the end of 2018 indicate that this figure has increased to 67%.

The major initiatives contributing to this reduction include

- Replacement of fluorescent lighting: In 2018 the CRU implemented a change out of its standard 65 watt fluorescent tube lighting units for more efficient 30 watt LED replacements across the three main office floors. This was further supported by introducing Passive Infrared Remote sensors (PIRS) throughout the building, which when not activated, turn the lighting off.
- Monitoring of energy consumption: Manual and automated monitoring of the CRU's energy consumption is recorded and maintained on a monthly basis and reported on a quarterly basis to the Green Machine. This regular monitoring and reporting allows the CRU to respond quickly to changes in energy consumption, where necessary.
- Staff awareness/personal initiatives: Raising staff awareness of energy use in the CRU had been a key element of the of the EET's work programme and this is continuing with the recently established Green Machine. Regular campaigns are undertaken to encourage staff to turn off lights when leaving meeting rooms and to turn off computers when not in use. In addition, pop-up reminders are employed on

each staff member's computer each evening to remind them to switch off their computers.

Future projects include

- Heating/air conditioning: Planning is underway and budget is allocated to replace the CRU's HVAC system in 2021. Given the scale of the project, and the need to ensure business continuity over the period of installation, a full survey will be required in 2020. Pending the replacement of the system, the turning on/off of the system is closely monitored by the CRU's Facilities Officer so as to ensure an appropriate temperature for staff, while at the same time minimising energy usage.
- Replacement of CFL lighting: Planning is also underway for a replacement of CFL lights in the building during 2020.

## 2.2 Water Use

In 2019, the Green Machine commenced monitoring water consumption. According to Dublin City Council, consumption of less than 4 m<sup>3</sup> per employee per-year is considered to be efficient usage. The CRU's water consumption is approximately 2.1 m<sup>3</sup> per-employee per-year. Water monitoring will continue into 2020.

## 2.3 Waste Management

In 2019, the CRU removed all mixed waste bins from the organisation and replaced these with segregated recycling and general waste bins. Individual bins at each staff members desk were also removed. Information posters were displayed on monitors across the CRU to educate staff on recyclable/non-recyclable materials. As the CRU's offices are leased and waste management is provided by the landlord, it was not possible initially to introduce compostable waste bins as these do not form part of the service provided by the landlord. However, plans are in place to undertake a pilot programme using compostable waste bins in January 2020. Depending on the outcome of this pilot, compostable waste bins may be rolled out across the organisation.

### *Reduction of waste generated*

At the start of 2018, the CRU implemented a new software package to facilitate paperless meetings. The system is used for all Commission meetings (held weekly) as well as for risk management meetings, Commission update meetings and other meetings related to the

governance of the organisation. This initiative has seen a substantial reduction in the CRU's use of paper.

In 2019, the Green Machine ran a campaign amongst staff to raise awareness of the amount of paper consumed at the CRU and to offer tips on how to reduce paper consumption at work. The CRU staff were also surveyed on their suggestions as to how consumption can be reduced at the CRU. Preliminary results indicate that in 2019, the CRU will consume 745 reams of paper. This represents a decrease of 15 reams when compared to 2018. Feedback from this survey will be considered by the Green Machine for future initiatives in 2020.

In March 2019, the CRU removed all single-use plastic cups from use. Prior to this initiative, water was provided to staff and visitors using water fountains and plastic cups. The number of plastic cups used in 2018 was over 12,000. The plastic cups were replaced by glasses that can be washed and reused. Posters were placed around the organisation to remind staff of the importance of minimising the amount of waste generated (see Appendix 3). In addition, all staff were provided with reusable coffee/tea keepcups to minimise the use of single-use paper cups for hot drinks.

### ***Maximisation of recycling***

The CRU has a recycling service in place for its confidential document shredding. During 2019, the amount of paper recycled was 3,205 kgs. This is the equivalent of 54 trees saved or 229 kW saved.

Regarding the general recycling bins, staff are regularly reminded as to the materials that can be recycled through posters and display screens.

## **2.4 Procurement of Goods and Services**

The CRU continues to apply best practice when it comes to the purchase of ICT equipment and when disposing of same. With the upgrading of devices following the set depreciation period, the CRU ensures that the products purchased have a better Energy Star Rating. A recent example is the move from LCD (ESR of 7.0) to LED monitors (ESR of 8.0), averaging a saving per screen of 6.5 watts. This along with the pop-up instruction to all staff to encourage better behaviour around turning off monitors and PC's have seen a net reduction in devices being left on. The CRU's policy of procuring laptops over station- based PC's will ultimately result in an average saving in energy from this source of around 80%. To date, the CRU has transitioned approximately 40% of workstations to laptops and further energy savings will be realised as the replacement programme rolls out.

Areas identified with respect to moving to a more sustainable supplier when the current contracts expire in 2020 include the cleaning services, tea/coffee supplies and computers/ICT equipment.

Members of the Green Team have also attended Green Government Workshops facilitated by DCCAE to brainstorm ideas, share experiences and best practices on water, energy, waste, plastics and procurement.

## **2.5 Transport and Travel**

In the area of travel, the CRU's Green Machine has undertaken a number of initiatives in 2019 to encourage the uptake of sustainable modes of transport among staff, and to reduce the necessity for travel, where possible. A major travel survey was conducted across the whole organisation to try and gain an understanding of staff travel (see Appendix 4). Following on from the survey, several information campaigns were implemented. There was a campaign launched to encourage cycling amongst staff, mainly via the provision of information regarding facilities (e.g. lockers, showers) to staff, as awareness of these among staff appeared low. The team also provided information to staff on the cost savings related to "Tax-saver" public transport tickets, and the potential savings associated with the "Bike-to-Work" scheme.

While the majority of staff are continuing to travel to work by car, several staff have purchased electric vehicles (EVs) in 2019, encouraged by the availability of charging facilities at the CRU. Additionally, 35% of staff are using sustainable modes of transport, encouraged by policies around "Tax-Saver" tickets and the "Bike to Work" scheme.

Working from home is permitted and promoted in the CRU. Currently, some 26% of staff avail of at least one day per week working from home and this figure is likely to increase in future years.

Video Conferencing (VC) has proven to be an attractive option for meetings in the CRU. A second VC facility was added in 2019 to meet the demand for this service. This avoids the carbon emissions related to staff travelling for business purposes. It is also a more time-efficient way of attending or contributing to meetings for staff.

In July 2018, the CRU installed three 7kw EV charging points to facilitate and encourage the use of EVs. At the time, there were four staff members driving EVs. The total number of users of the charging facilities had increased to seven by the end of 2019.

## **2.6 Environmental and sustainability awareness among staff**

In order to promote awareness among staff, the CRU's Green Machine has an ongoing programme of events to engage staff in the reduction of their environmental footprint, both at the CRU and in staff members' personal lives.

Firstly, to further the Green Machine's own knowledge of effective awareness raising, individual team members have attended a number of training courses delivered by SEAI. The Team also met with the SEAI Relationship Manager for Public Sector smaller office based organisations in the Leinster Area, Noel Burns, to learn about best approaches to running teams such as the "Green Machine".

Following on from this, members of the team have organised a Green Machine Lounge for all staff to make them aware of the work of the team and how staff can engage with the team. The Green Machine has also arranged for viewings of "Eco-Eye" related to bio-diversity, organised a knowledge share session on the results of the travel survey and organised a 5-day Step-Challenge competition as a part of the European Health Week.

In addition to the events, staff are kept up to date on sustainability initiatives through regular emails (e.g. introduction of recycling bins) and reminded of the impact that their activities have on the office environment. Members of the Green Machine have also undertaken a number of poster campaigns promoting sustainable practices e.g. World Bike Day and the Cycle to Work Scheme. The posters were displayed on several screens across the CRU. In addition, the Green Machine has provided contributions to the CRU's quarterly newsletter which now has a dedicated section to provide staff with quarterly updates on the work of the Green Machine.

### **3. Green Team**

As highlighted above, the CRU has a "Green Team" in place since 2010. Initially, the Team's focus was solely on energy efficiency but in 2019, its scope was broadened to include the range of sustainability issues. The Team was renamed the Green Machine with its own dedicated logo. A copy of the Terms of Reference is attached in Appendix 5.

The establishment of the Green Machine was approved by the CRU Commission in early 2019. The team comprises 10 members including a sponsor at Commission level and a chair at Director level. Meetings are held every six weeks throughout the year.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – CRU’s Energy and Sustainability Policy

### CRU Energy & Sustainability Policy

#### Our Commitment

The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) is committed to energy efficiency and environmental and economic sustainability. We will comply with our legal obligations and pursue continual improvement to minimise the impact of our activities on the environment. We strive to implement best practice in energy management and water conservation to reflect our own statutory duties. We also aim to reduce the waste we generate and to promote the use of “green” approaches in all our activities.

#### Objective

To reduce the environmental impact of CRU’s activities, in particular as regards our management of energy, water and waste.

#### Scope

We will focus on energy use, water use, waste management, procurement of goods and services, transport and travel, and environmental and sustainability awareness among staff.

#### Roles & Responsibilities

Every member of staff, contractor and visitor to CRU’s offices has a role to play in the achievement of CRU’s energy and sustainability objectives

We will communicate our Energy and Sustainability Policy, plans and performance to staff and we recognise the contribution our staff make towards minimising the environmental impact of the CRU.

Individuals will be made aware of their respective roles through consultation and advice.

- One of the **Commissioners** sponsors these activities at Commission level in the CRU.
- The **CRU’s Energy and Sustainability Manager** has day-to-day responsibility for achieving the CRU’s energy and sustainability objectives.
- The **Energy & Sustainability Group (The Green Machine)** is responsible for developing the CRU’s energy and sustainability programme, for monitoring and improving its effectiveness and reporting on its results.
- The **Energy and Sustainability Programme** is a statement of targets, actions & initiatives and resources committed to by the CRU and the Energy & Sustainability Group.

## Appendix 2 – Poster to mark CRU’s withdrawal of single-use plastic cups



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Say slán, goodbye, adios, żegnaj, αΥΤΙΟ  
to plastic cups

EUROPE PRODUCES A  
HUGE AMOUNT OF PLASTIC:  
**58 MILLION TONNES**  
EVERY YEAR

 40% packaging	 22% consumer & household goods	 20% building & construction
 9% cars & lorries	 6% electrical & electronic equipment	 3% agriculture

The CRU in 2017 and  
2018 consumed 12,000  
single use plastic cups.  
This is enough to span  
the length of 6 Croke  
Parks



To reduce our environmental impact the CRU will be phasing out  
single use plastic cups in the office

Any further idea? Let the energy efficiency team know 

## **Appendix 3 – Main results of travel to work survey 2019**

- **Public Transport**
  - About 65% of CRU use cars to get to work. However, 35% of the organisation are using sustainable modes of transport.
  - Additionally, there are 7 EVs in use by staff up from 5 in 2018. This has at least in part been due to the availability of EV chargers at CRU.
  - There is significant use of the “Tax-Saver” tickets by staff for public transport.
  
- **Cycling**
  - A campaign ran in 2019 to encourage cycling amongst staff. Some initiatives and workshops through the year were conducted to encourage cycling.
  - More information on facilities related to cycling (cycle paths on routes to CRU, showers, lockers, secure parking) were provided to staff, via the screens in the office and the CRU’s Intranet. 7.25% of staff cycle to work.
  
- **Working from Home**
  - 26% of staff work from home at least one day a week. Staff report high satisfaction with this arrangement.
  - The policy has changed recently so that more staff can avail of working from home, while increased use of laptops should enable this from an IT perspective.
  
- **Video Conferencing**
  - As part of the Travel survey 80% of staff are willing to use VC facilities for at least some meetings.
  - A second VC facility was installed in CRU in 2019 to meet higher demand for the service.
  
- **Carpooling**
  - CRU trialled the introduction of a carpooling system and encouraged carpooling on Car Free Day 2019.

## **Appendix 4 – Terms of Reference for Green Machine**

**Terms of Reference  
CRU Energy & Sustainability Group  
“The Green Machine”**

### **MANDATE**

As set out in the CRU’s Energy and Sustainability Policy, the mandate of the Green Machine is to:

- develop the CRU’s Energy and Sustainability Programme covering the period 2019 – 2021, in consultation with relevant staff;
- bring forward the Programme for approval by the Commission;
- co-ordinate the implementation of the Programme within CRU;
- report bi-annually to the Commission;
- update the programme as necessary during the period;
- provide reports to the SEAI, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment as required, and
- communicate with and engage staff in the work of the Green Machine.

### **SCOPE**

The work of the Green Machine will be focused primarily on

- energy use
- water use
- waste management
- procurement of goods and services
- transport and travel, and
- environmental and sustainability awareness among staff.

### **MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

There are 10 members. The current members are

- Commission sponsor - [REDACTED]
- Energy and Sustainability Manager and meeting Chair – [REDACTED]
- The Facilities Officer – [REDACTED]



Members volunteer to participate in the Group. Ideally, the Group includes volunteers from across the CRU. The Group aims to take decisions by consensus.

### **MEETINGS**

Meetings will be held 6 weekly. Meetings will take place in person.

### **DURATION**

The Green Machine will remain in place for the period of the CRU Statement of Strategy, i.e. a period of 3 years, 2019 – 2021.

### **AMENDING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis and recommendations made to the Commission. They may also be revised at the request of the CRU Chairperson.