

**Appearance of Ervia Chair Designate before the Oireachtas Joint Committee
on Housing, Planning and Local Government.
21st September 2016**

Chair designate – background

I was appointed to the board of Ervia and nominated as Chair designate in July 2016. I hold a number of non-executive roles and am the Ex-Chairman of Tesco Ireland and was CEO of Tesco Ireland from February 2006 until July 2013.

I have served as Chair of the board of Repak for 3 years and have been a board member of both Trinity College Dublin and An Bord Bia over a year. I am on the board of Inner City Enterprise (ICE) a charity supporting the unemployed to start their own businesses and for the past 3 years I have been a member of the Labour Market Council set up under the Department of Social Protection to advise on the implementation of the Pathways to Work strategy to tackle unemployment.

I was the Chair of Efficient Consumer Response (ECR) Ireland for a number of years. ECR Ireland encourages long-term co-operation between trading partners to better serve the Irish consumer and remove costs from the supply chain. I am also Chair of MarketHub, a startup retail technology company and Chair of Malone Group Engineering Ireland (Food and Pharmaceutical).

I run a business consultancy, Keohane Conaty, providing advice on strategic development to businesses. I am from Cork, live in Dublin and am married with 3 children.

Having spent many years in Tesco fulfilling customer requirements I hope to put the wide breadth of business skills and experience I have gained through my career in commercial, finance, decision-making, analysis and team building and my proven track record on delivering value to a business, to effective use, as Chair of Ervia.

Ervia Overview

Ervia is a 100% state owned commercial semi state utility responsible for Ireland's national gas, water and wastewater infrastructure and services. It delivers these services through two subsidiary companies, Gas Networks Ireland and Irish Water. Ervia is one of Ireland's largest indigenous companies with 1,600 direct employees and a further 5,700 directly employed in partner organisations providing services to its 2.4 million gas and water customers. In 2015 Ervia contributed €1.8bn to the Irish economy, €1.3bn of which went directly to Irish suppliers.

As the parent company, Ervia has overall responsibility for the operation and performance of its subsidiary utility companies. It ensures long term strategies are in place for national gas and water services, that each business has a robust business plan in place, and that they deliver against these plans. Ervia also has overall responsibility for the funding of these utilities and ensuring appropriate financial facilities are in place to allow the utilities operate and deliver their capital investment plans.

Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) is a long established infrastructure company that manages the national gas distribution network of 11,300km and the transmission network of 2,400km to safely deliver natural gas to homes and businesses in Ireland. The transmission system is linked to the UK and European gas markets through two undersea Interconnector pipelines to Scotland. Natural gas is now available in over 160 population centres in 19 counties for 673,000 gas users in Ireland.

In January 2014 Irish Water took over responsibility for delivering and managing water services from 34 (now 31) local authorities. This was done under Service Level Agreements with Local Authorities, ensuring drinking water and wastewater services continued to be delivered to business and the public, while the utility was established and Irish Water began to take over full responsibility for the operation of the system and implementation of the capital investment programmes.

Irish Water is a very new public utility with responsibility for 60,000km of water pipelines, 25,000km of sewers, 900 water treatment plants and 1,000 wastewater treatment plants. It serves 3.3 million people, produces 1.7 billion litres of drinking water and treats 1.4 billion litres of wastewater every day. Current estimates are that an investment of €13 billion is needed to bring Ireland's public water services to an acceptable standard. This will require a multi-annual multi-billion euro investment programme and is one of the largest national transformation programmes ever undertaken by the State.

The Role of the Ervia board

The Ervia board operates under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies which sets out its key responsibilities. Our role is to ensure the proper governance and oversight of the operation of Ervia and its companies and to hold the CEO and senior executives to account in delivering the objectives set by the shareholder. The board's responsibilities include guiding the strategic direction of the company, ensuring risks are managed appropriately, approving annual budgets and business plans, approving large capital projects, and major investment decisions, and setting and monitoring performance objectives. As Chair of Ervia I will be responsible for leading the board and ensuring its effectiveness.

Conclusion

I am aware this is a challenging role and I am committed to bringing my skills and experience and the necessary time to meet that challenge. I look forward to working with the board, the executive and the staff of Ervia, the shareholder and all stakeholders to continue to build trust and confidence and to ensure the board does its job effectively to deliver on the business objectives that have been set for the company.