



Environmental Protection Agency

Annual Highlights

2005

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EPA Annual Highlights 2005

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# Introduction

Welcome to the EPA Annual Highlights 2005.

This report provides information on the key undertakings of the EPA during 2005. It details the work completed in the areas of licensing and guidance, environmental enforcement, environmental monitoring and assessment and communications.

More detailed information is available in EPA publications, including the EPA newsletter *epaNews* and on the EPA website [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie).

Additional information on the EPA's other functions and its financial statements will be available in the Annual Report and Accounts later in the year.



# Director General's Statement

Welcome to the Annual Highlights report of the Environmental Protection Agency for 2005. The purpose of this document is to offer a snapshot of key activities and results in the EPA over the past year and to look forward to the key challenges for 2006. A more detailed Annual Report will be published and placed before the Houses of the Oireachtas later in the year.

Looking back on 2005 significant areas include:

## ENFORCEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

While Ireland has been the subject of a number of high profile enforcement actions on the part of the EU Commission, the activities of the EPA's Office of Environmental Enforcement has brought a new focus to enforcement of environmental legislation in Ireland. Operation of the Environmental Enforcement Network during 2005 involved over 900 staff from about 50 public sector agencies and government departments in enforcing environmental

law and in stamping out illegal waste activities.

Key achievements in 2005 included:

- ★ A reduction in illegal waste trafficking to Europe.
- ★ A dramatic turnaround in compliance with waste export regulations at ports.
- ★ A substantial increase in the capacity of local authorities to enforce environmental legislation.

Enforcement of licences issued by the EPA continued to yield results. Assisted by our network of five laboratories, which provide a sampling and analysis service, the Office of Environmental Enforcement availed of a range of enforcement options to prevent or remedy pollution. These included inspections, audits, legal notices and prosecutions. In 2005, 20 new prosecutions were initiated; significantly a number of these are being prosecuted in the higher courts, reflecting the serious nature of the alleged offences. Legal action by the EPA led to investment by licensees of approximately €19 million by way of improvements to site infrastructure and management at various facilities. The EPA will continue to focus on enforcement of environmental legislation in the future.

## ILLEGAL WASTE ACTIVITIES

A key priority for the EPA in 2005 was tackling illegal waste activities in Ireland, and I am happy to report that major illegal waste activities have been stamped out. A comprehensive investigation published by the EPA in 2005 concluded that large scale illegal dumping was no longer taking place. Illegal cross border movement of waste had reduced significantly as a result of increased vigilance and cross border cooperation. While this is very welcome news, there is no room for complacency in this area and environmental enforcement authorities including the EPA will have to remain vigilant.

The discovery some years ago of a number of very large illegal dumps in Wicklow and elsewhere has left a legacy of problem sites needing remediation. The EPA, along with local authorities, is continuing to work on finding the best solutions for these sites, while criminal investigations are ongoing at a number of them.

### LICENSING

On the licensing front, the EPA had a very busy year, having held two oral hearings on proposals for incinerator plants, and subsequently issuing the first licences for commercial municipal and hazardous waste incinerators. Conditions attached to these licences are amongst the most onerous in Europe, and require the facilities to meet the highest standards. Issues raised by the public at the oral hearings were addressed, and strengthened many of the conditions in the final licences.

Licensing the remediation of illegal waste sites has also provided a challenge for the licensing team in 2005 with many complex issues to be dealt with. Alongside this has been the requirement to review all IPC licences to comply with the requirements of the IPPC Directive by 2007. This work is well underway at this stage.

### EMISSIONS TRADING

2005 saw the commencement of the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme, which the EPA has responsibility for implementing in Ireland. The National Allocation Plan and Methodology, finalised in 2004, have proven to be robust and allocations for 2005 have been issued to operators' accounts. As participant companies surrender allowances for the first time in Spring 2006, the EPA now faces the challenge of ensuring efficient verification and administration of this process.





Work is already underway in preparing a National Allocation Plan for the second Kyoto phase 2008-2012 of the emissions trading scheme. The very significant advances made at the recent Montreal meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol make this work all the more important.

#### DEALING WITH ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC WASTE

The EPA is responsible for enforcing the regulations that deal with recycling of waste from electrical and electronic equipment. These regulations were introduced in August 2005. Already, over 5,000 tonnes of waste from this source has been collected at recycling centres country-wide. Coupled with the success of the plastic bag tax and the continuing rollout of source segregated household waste collection, Ireland is making huge strides in waste management.

#### MONITORING AND REPORTING

In terms of environmental monitoring and reporting the EPA issued a number of reports in 2005. Water quality in Ireland remains of a high standard, with a decline in instances of serious pollution, although eutrophication (over-enrichment) and the lack of municipal waste water treatment continue to be the biggest problems. Although air quality is also of a high standard, increasing traffic emissions remain a challenge to Ireland's ability to comply with EU air quality standards in the future. Dioxin levels in Ireland remain amongst the lowest in Europe.

#### COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

This year, as in the past, we have been working to improve public awareness of issues of critical environmental importance. This work included our continued involvement in, and sponsorship of the *EcoEye* TV programme, the launch of educational resource packs consistent with primary and second level curricula, as well as ongoing association with schools' science projects. Every year we participate in a number of exhibitions and this year was the first time that we hosted a stand at the National Ploughing Championships. The feedback received from our stakeholders on such occasions is an invaluable input to our work.

Following a series of incidents in the Ringaskiddy area this year the EPA reviewed its mechanisms for informing the public of notified incidents. The EPA now publishes details on its website of any significant incidents reported to the EPA and requiring investigation. The feedback we have received regarding this decision has been positive and the information has been well received. In 2006 the EPA will endeavour to make further progress in building trust with communities.

#### RESOURCES

None of this work would be possible without the dedicated and professional workforce that is the EPA. I would like to express my appreciation to all the staff in the EPA for their hard work and commitment during 2005. Over the past number of years the EPA has been assigned a significant

amount of new work in complex areas without any increase in resources. I am very glad to report that in 2005 the EPA has received sanction for a significant increase in staffing levels, which will allow us to carry out this work to very high standards. I am grateful to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for their help in this regard.

I would also like to thank my fellow Directors in the EPA for their dedication and hard work in 2005 and the Advisory Committees upon whom we rely for sound advice on a range of issues, including waste prevention, genetically modified organisms and emissions trading.

I invite you to read through the rest of this document and also to look at our web pages at [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie) where further detail of the work we undertake is presented.



**Mary Kelly**

Director General, EPA, December 2005

# 1 Licensing & Guidance

The Office of Licensing and Guidance has a wide remit, which includes licensing large-scale industrial and waste facilities, permitting petrol storage facilities and granting consents for genetically modified organisms.

Its remit has been expanded in recent times with responsibility for implementing the Emissions Trading Directive, the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive and the National Waste Prevention Programme.

It is responsible also for implementing the Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive and the Ozone Depleting Substances Regulations.

## INTEGRATED POLLUTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL (IPPC) LICENSING

The IPPC licensing system has an increased emphasis on prevention with the aim of reducing emissions to air, water and land, reducing waste and using energy efficiently. Large-scale or complex industrial processes with significant polluting potential require an IPPC licence. Work completed under IPPC licensing in 2005 includes the following:

- ★ Since July 2005, the EPA licensing regime has been updated and strengthened to meet the requirements of the EU Directive on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC).
- ★ All current licences have been reviewed for compliance with the IPPC Directive requirements and a total of 122 have been amended in 2005 to bring them into compliance. A further 64 will be subjected to a more detailed review commencing in 2006.
- ★ During the course of the year 29 licences were granted while 3 licence applications were either withdrawn or abandoned. In addition 28 Proposed Decisions were issued.

## WASTE LICENSING

Under the Waste Management Act 1996 the EPA is responsible for the licensing of all significant waste recovery and disposal facilities managed by local authorities and private operators. The waste licensing process places stringent conditions on the operation of facilities to ensure that the potential environmental impact is strictly controlled.

In 2005:

- ★ Comprehensive oral hearings were held in relation to applications for the incineration of municipal and hazardous waste. These oral hearings related to proposed facilities in Carranstown, Duleek, Co. Meath and Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork.
- ★ Having considered the recommendations in the Chairpersons' reports of the oral hearings the EPA granted licences for these two facilities. The licences provide for incineration with energy recovery of non-hazardous waste in Duleek and incineration with energy recovery of both hazardous and non-hazardous waste in Ringaskiddy.
- ★ In addition to these licences the EPA granted new and revised licences for 9 landfills, 8 waste transfer stations, 2 hazardous waste disposal facilities, 4 compost facilities and 1 materials recovery facility. An application in respect of a compost facility in Co. Tipperary was refused at proposed decision stage and subsequently abandoned. An application for a revised licence in respect of the storage of dredged sand and gravel in the Boyne Estuary was also refused. There were 3 other licence applications withdrawn or abandoned. In addition, 29 Proposed Decisions were issued.

The EPA's policy of openness and transparency will be further enhanced with the online publication of all documentation received in relation to the EPA's licensing activities. The roll out of the system will commence in the first quarter of 2006.

Details of all EPA licences are available at [www.epa.ie/Licensing](http://www.epa.ie/Licensing).



#### GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISM (GMO) CONSENTS

The EPA is the competent authority in Ireland for the implementation of the GMO Regulations on the contained use, the deliberate release into the environment and the transboundary movement of GMOs.

In 2005:

- ★ There were 205 entries on the register of GMO users in Ireland. More than 95 per cent of these relate to contained use, the majority of which are third-level research laboratories classified as being of negligible risk.
- ★ 14 consents were granted in 2005 for the contained use of GMOs and site inspections were carried out on 15 GMO contained use premises. Three consents were granted for placing GMOs on the market (deliberate release) within the European Union.
- ★ The EPA hosted the European Enforcement Project Conference of GMO enforcement regulators. The conference focused on exchanging knowledge, information and expertise on the regulation and control of GMO activities.

#### VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUND (VOC) PERMITS

The EPA is responsible for issuing permits for any activity that involves the storage and distribution of petrol at terminals exceeding defined throughputs. These permits control volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions resulting from petrol storage and distribution terminals. The EPA granted 4 VOC permits, bringing the total number of VOC permits issued to 29.



## CERTIFICATES OF REGISTRATION

Whereas local authorities regulate private sector facilities, the EPA uses Certificates of Registration to regulate low risk local authority waste recovery facilities.

In 2005 the EPA issued 157 Certificates of Registration as follows:

- ★ 140 under the Waste Management (Permit) Regulations, 1998.
- ★ 13 covering both the Waste Management (Permit) Regulations, 1998 and the new Waste Management (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) Regulations 2005.
- ★ 4 under the new Waste Management (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) Regulations 2005.

## EMISSIONS TRADING

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions are accepted as a major cause of climate change. Emissions Trading, which applies to large producers of GHGs – such as the industry, power generation, health and education sectors – reduces these emissions in the most cost effective way. The EPA is the competent authority responsible for implementing Emissions Trading in Ireland.

- ★ In March following extensive public consultation the final *National Allocation Methodology and Final Allocation Decision 2005–2007* was published. This defines the basis on which allocations of greenhouse gas emission allowances are to be made for the initial phase of the scheme. Allowances totalling 66.96 million tonnes are to be allocated in the following way:

Category	Allowances
Installations permitted before March 31, 2004	65,006,999
New Entrant Set Aside	1,004,400
Combined Heat and Power Set Aside	446,400
Auction	502,201
<b>Total</b>	<b>66,960,000</b>

- ★ Greenhouse Gas Emissions Permits were issued to installations capable of monitoring and reporting emissions in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations. At present 109 installations hold valid permits.
- ★ A National Emission Trading Registry was established, which ensures the accurate accounting of the issue, transfer, cancellation and surrender of emission allowances within the Emissions Trading Scheme. The Registry is accessible at [www.etr.ie](http://www.etr.ie). In accordance with the *Final Allocation Decision*, allowances for 2005 have been issued into each installation's Registry Account.
- ★ The rules of the Emissions Trading System require the annual verification of data and information relating to greenhouse gas emissions prior to the surrender of allowances to the EPA. The EPA established a panel of emissions verifiers that are qualified to undertake this work and are accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Board.

## LICENSING ACTIVITIES IN 2005

	IPPC Licences	Waste Licences	GMO Consents	Volatile Organic Compound Permits	Certificates of Registration
Applications considered	83	60	20	4	-
Proposed Decisions	28	29	-	2	-
Objections received	26	60	-	-	-
Final Decisions	29	26	17	4	157

- ★ The EPA held consultation meetings with stakeholders in the Emissions Trading Scheme in preparation for the second National Allocation Plan for emissions allowances covering the period 2008–2012.

Full details of the work of the Emissions Trading unit including details of permitted installations are accessible at [www.epa.ie/Licensing/EmissionsTrading](http://www.epa.ie/Licensing/EmissionsTrading).

### TECHNICAL GUIDANCE

The EPA produces technical guidance on a variety of topics to support environmental best practice as well as licensing and enforcement activities. Particular guidance documents produced in 2005 cover Ozone Depleting Substances, Solvents Regulations and Strategic Environmental Assessment. These and all other guidance documents are available at [www.epa.ie/TechnicalGuidanceandAdvice](http://www.epa.ie/TechnicalGuidanceandAdvice).

### NATIONAL WASTE PREVENTION PROGRAMME

The National Waste Prevention Programme, which the EPA co-ordinates, aims at reversing the trends of increased material use and waste generation in Ireland. The first annual report for the programme was published in 2005 and is available at [www.epa.ie/OurEnvironment/Waste/NationalWastePreventionProgramme](http://www.epa.ie/OurEnvironment/Waste/NationalWastePreventionProgramme).

In 2005:

- ★ The EPA launched a training programme for waste prevention and minimisation in collaboration with IBEC and the Clean Technology Centre. To date 12 companies have commenced this training.
- ★ The Local Authority Prevention Demonstration Programme was launched with an invitation to all local authorities to apply for grant aid to support their local waste prevention efforts.
- ★ A web based resource collating information relating to waste in Ireland was developed and is available at [www.epa.ie/ourevironment/waste](http://www.epa.ie/ourevironment/waste). For the first time, these pages electronically link all waste policies, plans, recycling and prevention programmes in Ireland.

### WASTE FROM ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT (WEEE)

The objective of the EU Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive is to prevent the generation of electrical and electronic waste and to promote reuse, recycling and other forms of recovery. The WEEE Directive is already greatly improving recycling and recovery efforts of this priority waste stream in Ireland. The EPA is the lead authority for enforcing these regulations in Ireland.

EPA inspections of retail premises commenced on the first morning of the regulations, which came into effect on 13 August 2005. Over 200 companies are being investigated by the EPA for possible non-compliance with the requirements of the Directive. Legal action has been instigated in 3 cases.

### STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

Under the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, competent authorities (such as planning authorities, government departments, regional waste management authorities) must consult the designated environmental authorities and subject specific plans and programmes to an environmental assessment. These include development plans for energy, transport, telecommunications and land-use, for example, as well as waste and water management plans. In Ireland, the EPA is a designated environmental authority along with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources.

- ★ The EPA was consulted on over 100 plans for the purposes of Screening and Scoping for SEA. Most of these plans related to land-use planning.
- ★ New web based SEA resources and information were developed by the EPA and launched in 2005 to help plan/programme makers and the general public in their search for relevant environmental information. It is accessible on the EPA website at [www.epa.ie/TechnicalGuidanceandAdvice/StrategicEnvironmentalAssessment](http://www.epa.ie/TechnicalGuidanceandAdvice/StrategicEnvironmentalAssessment).
- ★ A number of initiatives have been taken by the EPA to develop capacity in the area of SEA in Ireland. The EPA organises training and workshops for environmental authorities and has undertaken a pilot SEA of the Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan.

## 2

# Environmental Enforcement

The Office of Environmental Enforcement is responsible for the enforcement of EPA licences issued for waste, industrial and other activities. It also exercises a supervisory role in relation to the environmental protection activities of local authorities, through auditing their performance, providing advice and guidance, and, in appropriate cases, giving legally binding Directions. A key priority for the Office in 2005 was tackling illegal waste activities in Ireland.



### UNAUTHORISED WASTE ACTIVITIES

A major investigation into unauthorised waste activities in Ireland was published in 2005. The report set out, for the first time, a comprehensive overview of the issues underpinning the waste management sector and the scale of unauthorised waste activity around the country.

The report concluded that large-scale illegal dumping of the type that occurred in Co. Wicklow during the period 1997 to 2002 was no longer taking place. The investigation found that illegal cross border movement of waste had reduced significantly as a result of increased vigilance and cross border co-operation. (See map on opposite page for list of unauthorised waste facilities and landfill sites)

#### Other report highlights:

- ★ Unauthorised collection of waste is a significant problem with over 50 per cent of local authorities reporting problems in this area. The unregulated, small-scale 'man in the van' operators account for some of the increase in illegal fly-tipping reported.
- ★ Approximately 80 per cent of all local authorities identified backyard burning as being a significant issue. Backyard burning contributes over 50 per cent of all dioxin emissions in Ireland and is more prevalent in rural areas.

- ★ The waste stream that has resulted in the greatest level of illegal activity is construction and demolition waste. Over 80 per cent of the waste found in unauthorised landfills was construction and demolition waste.

### ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT NETWORK

The Environmental Enforcement Network harnesses the collective resources, expertise and investigative capacity of all public sector agencies and government departments that can contribute to enforcing environmental law and stamping out illegal waste activity in Ireland. The network is now up and running with over 900 staff from about 50 agencies involved.

During 2005, illegal trafficking of waste to mainland Europe and beyond was reduced through:

- ★ Tightening up procedures for controlling the transfrontier shipment of waste abroad.
- ★ Stepping up inspections at ports.
- ★ Increased local authority involvement in international coordinated inspections of waste loads.

This was exemplified by the dramatic turnaround in compliance with waste export regulations at recent port inspections in Dublin. Compliance shifted from 100 per cent non-compliance in 2004 to 100 per cent compliance in 2005.

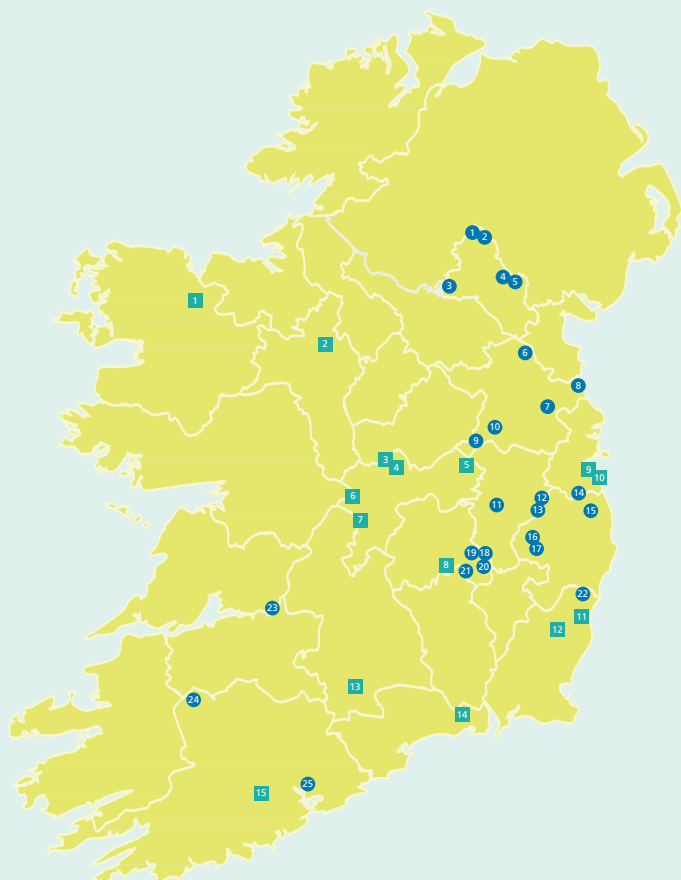
A substantial amount of work by the Environmental Enforcement Network was in building the capacity of local authorities to enforce environmental legislation. This was achieved through:

- ★ Developing a national protocol for complaints handling and investigation.
- ★ Developing a national protocol for implementing the EU Recommendation on Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspection.
- ★ Developing 13 guidance documents to assist local authorities in carrying out their statutory environmental functions.
- ★ Developing and delivering waste enforcement skills training to local authorities.

The Environmental Enforcement Network also held four national conferences attended by over 1,000 delegates. Consolidated enforcement data for the Enforcement Network was delivered at the waste conference in October. Since the establishment of the Network 12,000 site inspections were carried out, 377 check points were manned, 1588 notices were served and 303 prosecutions were taken under the Waste Management Act.



## UNAUTHORISED WASTE FACILITIES AND LANDFILL SITES



### Map ID Unauthorised Waste Facility Operators

1	Loftus Recycling Ltd
2	Beirnes Bins
3	Mr. Greg Kinehan
4	Mr. Hugh Moran
5	Mr. John McCann
6	Mr. Ciaran Yates
7	Mr. Martin Bannon
8	Scully Skip Hire
9	South Dublin County Council
10	Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council
11	Greenstar
12	Murray Waste
13	Duggan Skip Hire
14	Waterford City Council
15	Mr. Sean Murphy

### Map ID Location of Unauthorised Landfill Sites

1	Kilmurry, Cullaville, Co. Monaghan (Site 1)
2	Kilmurry, Cullaville, Co. Monaghan (Site 2)
3	Colemann Island, Clones, Co. Monaghan
4	Oram, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan
5	Tullycaghney, Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan
6	Drumconrath, Co. Meath
7	Timooole, Co. Meath
8	Laytown, Co. Meath
9	Clonard, Co. Meath
10	Longwood, Co. Meath
11	Pollardstown, Kildare
12	Roadstone Quarry, Blessington, Co. Wicklow
13	Russborough, Co. Wicklow
14	Killegar, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow
15	Kilpedder, Wicklow
16	Whitestown, Wicklow
17	Stevenson's Quarry, Castleruddery, Co. Wicklow
18	Oldcourt, Ballylynan, Co. Laois
19	Ballycorman, Ballylynan, Co. Laois
20	Ballynagarr, Ballylynan, Co. Laois
21	Newtown, Castlecomer, Co. Laois
22	Coolgreaney, Gorey, Co. Wexford
23	Parteen, Clare
24	Rockchapel, Co. Cork
25	Weir Island, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork

## LICENCE ENFORCEMENT

A significant amount of resources are expended by the EPA on the enforcement of the licences issued under the Waste Management Act and the Environmental Protection Agency Act. These licences can be viewed at [www.epa.ie/Licensing](http://www.epa.ie/Licensing).

In 2005:

- ★ A total of 173 audits and 703 inspections of licensed IPPC and waste facilities were conducted.
- ★ The number of non-compliance notices served was 619. Eight statutory notices were issued to licensees.
- ★ The main non-compliance issues encountered related to waste management, containment and exceedences of emission limits at facilities.
- ★ The number of complaints made to the EPA in relation to IPPC facilities and waste facilities numbered 466 and 657 respectively. Five IPPC facilities accounted for 41 per cent of all licenced industry complaints and were concerned with odours, air quality, noise, water and dust. Over half of all waste complaints received (335) related to six facilities. The most common cause of complaint was odour.

Licence Enforcement Activities in 2005

	IPPC	Waste	Total
Inspections	417	286	703
Audits	113	60	173
Monitoring visits	561	114	675
Statutory notices	7	1	8
Notifications of non-compliance	426	193	619
Complaints	466	657	1123
Prosecutions	10	10	20

LEGAL MATTERS

Prosecution is one enforcement tool available to the EPA. Others include legal notices to implement specific measures to prevent or remedy pollution. Legal action pursued by the EPA in 2005 included the following:

- ★ 20 cases were brought against licensees before the District Courts. Convictions were handed down in 16 of these cases, three were referred to higher courts and one was dismissed on a court technicality. The majority of the charges related to persistent breaches of emission limit values, failure to install infrastructure and failure to submit information to the EPA as required under licence conditions.
- ★ The Director of Public Prosecutions directed that Books of Evidence be served in the three cases that were referred to higher courts.

— Waterford County Council (Tramore Landfill) was returned for trial for a hearing at Waterford Circuit Court on 10th January 2006.

— Similarly, Waterford City Council (Kilbarry Landfill) was returned for trial for a hearing on the same date.

— Schwarz Pharma Limited was also returned for trial for hearing at Ennis Circuit Court on 14th February 2006.

- ★ As of the end of December 2005, the EPA has 11 District Court cases on hand.
- ★ A further case is with the Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration.
- ★ Legal action taken by the EPA led to investment by licensees in the region of approximately €19 million by way of improvements to site infrastructure and management.

PUBLIC AUTHORITY ENFORCEMENT

The EPA exercises a supervisory role in respect of the environmental protection activities of local authorities. In 2005 the Office of Environmental Enforcement:

- ★ Carried out 22 audits of local authorities on wastewater and drinking water treatment plants.
- ★ Undertook 244 investigations on foot of 455 complaints made to the EPA in relation to activities that were the responsibility of local authorities.
- ★ 39 per cent of these complaints related to waste issues, 36 per cent to water issues with the remainder relating to odour, noise and planning in the main.

Public Authority Enforcement Activities in 2005

Audits	22
Investigations	244
Advice and Recommendation Notices	76
Proposed Directions	2
Directions	0

## 3

# Environmental Assessment

The Office of Environmental Assessment is responsible for ambient monitoring of water and air, preparing national monitoring programmes and conducting a national hydrometric programme, providing sampling and laboratory assistance to local authorities for monitoring and providing various laboratory related services to support the EPA licensing and enforcement functions.

It has responsibility for co-ordinating a national environmental research programme, establishing environmental databases, producing regular reports on environmental quality and publishing periodic State of the Environment Reports. The remit of the Office also includes implementing key aspects of the EU Air Framework Directive and EU Water Framework Directive.

## WATER QUALITY MONITORING

The *Water Quality in Ireland Report 2001-2003* was published in 2005 and found that, overall Ireland's water quality remains of a high standard.

The report concludes that:

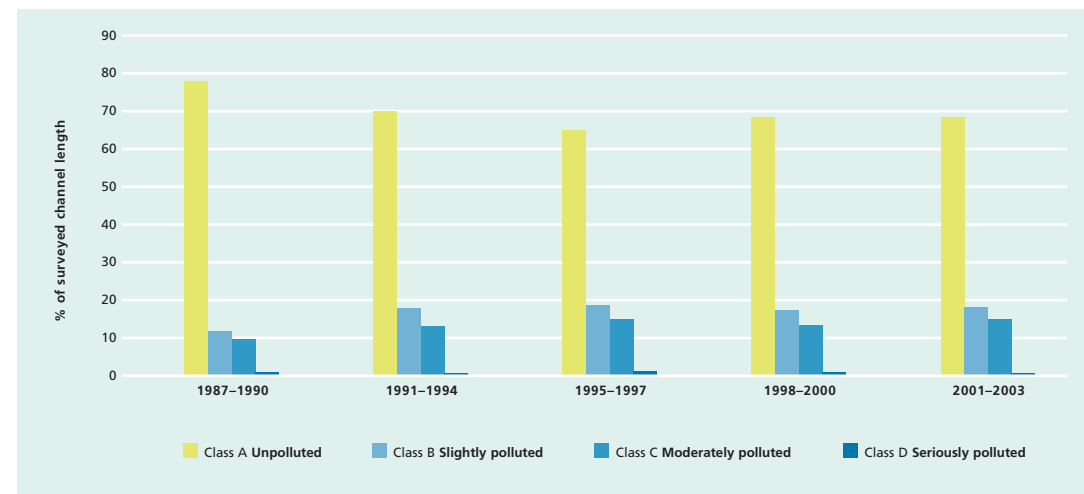
- ★ The long term trends in river and stream water quality (see graph below) indicate a decline in instances of serious pollution in such waters in recent years.
- ★ Eutrophication (over enrichment by nutrients) of all waters continues to be the main threat to the waters with agricultural run-off and municipal discharges being the key contributors.

## WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

The Water Framework Directive represents the most significant development in the field of EU water policy in the past 25 years. The Directive provides an overarching framework and programme to deliver long-term protection of the water environment and to improve the quality of all waters – both ground water and surface waters – in all Member States.

The EPA convenes the National Technical Co-ordination Group for the Water Framework Directive. The group co-ordinated the preparation of a Characterisation Report. This report dealt with the physical, chemical and biological nature of surface and ground waters, the human impacts on these waters and provided an assessment of the risk of these waters failing to achieve the objectives of the Directive by 2015. The EPA submitted a national summary to the EU Commission in March 2005.

Water Quality in Ireland





## AIR QUALITY MONITORING AND EMISSIONS

The Environmental Protection Agency's *Air Quality and Emissions to Air Report 2003*, published in 2005, provides an overview of ambient air quality in 2003 and air emissions trends between 1990 and 2003. The report concludes that:

- ★ In general, air quality in Ireland has maintained a good status throughout the country.
- ★ Increasing traffic emissions remains a key challenge to Ireland's ability to comply with more stringent EU air quality standards in the future.
- ★ Strict limits have been set by the EU for acidifying gases which arise mainly from power stations, road traffic, solvent use and agriculture (ammonia). Fundamental changes, entailing substantial costs, are needed in these key sectors of the economy to meet these limits.

The EPA's web site provides details of all the air monitoring activity throughout the country. The information can be accessed through a map of Ireland showing the various monitoring sites. Clicking on a given location shows the latest data, or results of completed assessments, at that site. It can be accessed at [www.epa.ie/OurEnvironment/Air/AccessMaps](http://www.epa.ie/OurEnvironment/Air/AccessMaps).

A survey report entitled *Dioxin Levels in the Irish Environment (Summer 2004)* confirmed that dioxin levels in Ireland remain among the lowest in Europe. The report showed that dioxin levels in Ireland in 2004 were 33 per cent lower than in 1995 and 20 per cent lower than in 2000. The



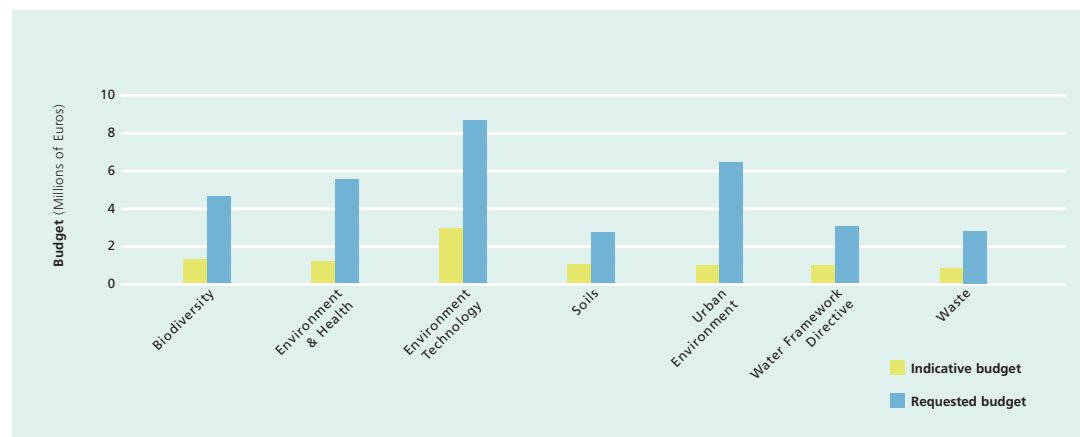
report's findings are based on a survey of dioxins and dioxin-like compounds in cow's milk undertaken in mid-2004.

### BATHING WATER QUALITY

The quality of Ireland's bathing waters continues to be of a high standard based on the findings of the 2004 Bathing Water Quality Report.

- ★ The report associates the high quality of bathing waters with investments in recent years in waste water treatment facilities.
- ★ A total of 131 bathing areas, both seawater and freshwater, were monitored throughout the 2004 bathing season.
- ★ In 2004 128 of the 131 bathing areas (98 per cent) complied with the minimum standards laid down under EU legislation.
- ★ 115 of the 131 (88 per cent) bathing areas complied with the much stricter guideline standards specified by the EU.
- ★ 99 of the 131 (76 per cent) bathing areas complied with the more extensive National Limit Values.

### Indicative and Requested Budget for each Research Thematic Area in 2005



### ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH & REPORTING

The EPA continued to fund new research projects ranging from desk studies to large-scale multi-annual projects in 2005. To date it has provided funding to individual researchers and organisations – including colleges, research institutes and companies – for over 300 projects.

In the summer of 2005:

- ★ The EPA announced a research call, under seven thematic areas, with grants of over €10 million to be awarded.

- ★ The research call was very well supported. In total 128 research proposals were submitted and research funding was requested in all thematic areas well in excess of the indicative budget (see graph above).
- ★ The research areas were Biodiversity; Environment & Health; Environmental Technologies; Soils; Urban Environment Water Framework and Waste.

## 4

## Communications & Corporate Services

The EPA's Office of Communications and Corporate Services ensures, among other things, that the EPA conducts its business activities in an efficient manner, conforming to best business practice and also effectively communicates with its stakeholders and the general public.

In 2005...

- ★ A review was conducted of the EPA's incident notification and emergency response protocols. The review recommended that details of any new incidents reported to the EPA and requiring investigation should be made available to the public on the EPA website. Information on any such incidents is now available at [www.epa.ie/NewsCentre/IncidentNotification](http://www.epa.ie/NewsCentre/IncidentNotification).
- ★ In recognition of the growing importance of the environmental agenda in Ireland, the EPA sponsored the first *Environment Ireland* conference. The conference addressed the most significant developments in environmental policy North and South; the future environmental policy agenda; best practice environmental management and emerging issues and new technologies.
- ★ Series three of the popular television programme *EcoEye* was broadcast on RTE early in 2005 and repeated in the summer. Approximately 300,000 people saw each programme, the highest ever viewings for the series. A fourth *EcoEye* series is currently being developed for broadcast in 2006.
- ★ The EPA launched a new resource pack for Leaving Certificate Geography teachers and students, for teaching the environmental components of the new geography curriculum. The pack is built around 30 short video clips. It includes support materials such as comprehension questions, group discussions, research and other projects. The pack is available in both English and Irish. It was distributed by the Department of Education and Science to every secondary school and can also be accessed on the EPA website at [www.epa.ie/Education/SecondLevelSchools/LeavingCertificateGeographyPack](http://www.epa.ie/Education/SecondLevelSchools/LeavingCertificateGeographyPack).
- ★ The EPA participated in the first edition of the Science and Technology in Action resource pack, which aims to enhance the relevance of science to everyday life and engage students in the world of applied science and technology. This multi-featured resource contains lessons and teaching materials and each lesson relates to the activities of one of the participating organisations. The EPA lesson for Chemistry focused on sewage treatment.
- ★ The EPA published a series of 'Viewpoint' papers on various topics such as waste, air quality, and renewable energy. Each paper highlighted key environmental issues, the roles of the EPA and other state and non-government agencies and bodies, as well as listing recommendations for future action. The documents are available to download at [www.epa.ie/NewsCentre/EPAViewpoints](http://www.epa.ie/NewsCentre/EPAViewpoints).
- ★ The EPA initiated a public policy discussion on anaerobic digestion and its benefits for waste management, agriculture, renewable energy and the environment. The Department of Agriculture and Food now plans to provide grant aid support to a number of demonstration projects for managing agricultural wastes, including a large-scale anaerobic digestion plant.

## EPA PUBLICATIONS 2005

The majority of EPA publications are available to download from the EPA website at [www.epa.ie/publications](http://www.epa.ie/publications).

### Air

Air Quality and Emissions to Air Report 2003 €20

Dioxin Levels in the Irish Environment – Third Assessment (Summer 2004) Based on Levels in Cows' Milk 2005 €10

### Corporate

EPA – Annual Highlights 2004

EPA Annual Report and Accounts 2004

Ireland's Environment – Who Does What

The Environmental Protection Agency – Who We Are, What We Do

epaNews February 2005

epaNews July 2005

epaNews November 2005

### Waste

National Waste Database Interim Report 2003 (web only)

National Waste Prevention Programme – Annual Report

The Nature and Extent of Unauthorised Waste Activity in Ireland €20

### Water

Water Quality in Ireland 2001–2003 (& CD Rom) €30 and 3 associated maps €10 each

The Quality of Drinking Water in Ireland. A Report for 2004 (& CD Rom) €25

Bathing Water Report 2004 (web only)

### Conference and Special Reports

Bridging the Gap, Information for Action. Conference Report

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading: National Allocation Methodology 2005–2007 €5

Enforcement Network News July 2005

### Guidance Notes

IPPC Guidance Note: Storage and Transfer of Materials for Scheduled Activities €10

Best Practice Guidelines on Vehicle Coating & Refinishing (& CD Rom) €7

Best Practice Guidelines on Dry Cleaning (& CD Rom) €7

Waste Management and IPPC Licensing: Aspects of Licensing Procedures – Objections and Oral Hearings €2

### Environmental Research Reports

Fertiliser Taxes: Implementation Issues. Final Report €5

Water Framework Directive: Water Status – Identification and Ranking Water Quality: Nature Conservation Designated Areas. Final Report. €5

Water Framework Directive: A Desk Study to determine a Methodology for the Monitoring of the 'Morphological Condition' of Irish Rivers. Synthesis Report.

An Investigation into the Performance of Subsoils and Stratified Sand Filters for the Treatment of Wastewater from On-site Systems. Synthesis Report.

Production of Organo-Mineral Fertilisers from Mixtures of Composted Pig Slurry Solids and other Biodegradable Wastes – Final Report. €7

Water Framework Directive: The Application of Mathematical Models as Decision-Support Tools. Synthesis Report.

Water Framework Directive: Development of a Methodology for the Characterisation of Unpolluted Groundwater. Synthesis Report.

Water Framework Directive: Characterisation of Reference Conditions and Testing of Typology of Rivers. Final Report. €10

Nutrient Levels and the Zebra Mussel Population in Lough Key. Synthesis Report.

Climate Change: Regional Predictions for Ireland. Final Report. €7

Eutrophication from Agricultural Sources – Phosphorous Chemistry of Mineral and Peat Soils in Ireland. Final Report €10

All publications can also be purchased either on-line or from EPA Publications' Sales at +353 1 2680100



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