

Focus on Local Authority  
Environmental Enforcement

Activity Report 2019



## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

The EPA is responsible for protecting and improving the environment as a valuable asset for the people of Ireland. We are committed to protecting people and the environment from the harmful effects of radiation and pollution.

### The work of the EPA can be divided into three main areas:

**Regulation:** *Implementing regulation and environmental compliance systems to deliver good environmental outcomes and target those who don't comply.*

**Knowledge:** *Providing high quality, targeted and timely environmental data, information and assessment to inform decision making.*

**Advocacy:** *Working with others to advocate for a clean, productive and well protected environment and for sustainable environmental practices.*

### Our responsibilities include:

#### Licensing

- Large-scale industrial, waste and petrol storage activities;
- Urban waste water discharges;
- The contained use and controlled release of Genetically Modified Organisms;
- Sources of ionising radiation;
- Greenhouse gas emissions from industry and aviation through the EU Emissions Trading Scheme.

#### National Environmental Enforcement

- Audit and inspection of EPA licensed facilities;
- Drive the implementation of best practice in regulated activities and facilities;
- Oversee local authority responsibilities for environmental protection;
- Regulate the quality of public drinking water and enforce urban waste water discharge authorisations;
- Assess and report on public and private drinking water quality;
- Coordinate a network of public service organisations to support action against environmental crime;
- Prosecute those who flout environmental law and damage the environment.

#### Waste Management and Chemicals in the Environment

- Implement and enforce waste regulations including national enforcement issues;
- Prepare and publish national waste statistics and the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan;
- Develop and implement the National Waste Prevention Programme;
- Implement and report on legislation on the control of chemicals in the environment.

#### Water Management

- Engage with national and regional governance and operational structures to implement the Water Framework Directive;
- Monitor, assess and report on the quality of rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waters, bathing waters and groundwaters, and measurement of water levels and river flows.

#### Climate Science & Climate Change

- Publish Ireland's greenhouse gas emission inventories and projections;
- Provide the Secretariat to the Climate Change Advisory Council and support to the National Dialogue on Climate Action;
- Support National, EU and UN Climate Science and Policy development activities.

#### Environmental Monitoring & Assessment

- Design and implement national environmental monitoring systems: technology, data management, analysis and forecasting;
- Produce the State of Ireland's Environment and Indicator Reports;
- Monitor air quality and implement the EU Clean Air for Europe Directive, the Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution, and the National Emissions Ceiling Directive;
- Oversee the implementation of the Environmental Noise Directive;
- Assess the impact of proposed plans and programmes on the Irish environment.

#### Environmental Research and Development

- Coordinate and fund national environmental research activity to identify pressures, inform policy and provide solutions;
- Collaborate with national and EU environmental research activity.

#### Radiological Protection

- Monitoring radiation levels and assess public exposure to ionising radiation and electromagnetic fields;
- Assist in developing national plans for emergencies arising from nuclear accidents;
- Monitor developments abroad relating to nuclear installations and radiological safety;
- Provide, or oversee the provision of, specialist radiation protection services.

#### Guidance, Awareness Raising, and Accessible Information

- Provide independent evidence-based reporting, advice and guidance to Government, industry and the public on environmental and radiological protection topics;
- Promote the link between health and wellbeing, the economy and a clean environment;
- Promote environmental awareness including supporting behaviours for resource efficiency and climate transition;
- Promote radon testing in homes and workplaces and encourage remediation where necessary.

#### Partnership and networking

- Work with international and national agencies, regional and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, representative bodies and government departments to deliver environmental and radiological protection, research coordination and science-based decision making.

#### Management and structure of the EPA

The EPA is managed by a full time Board, consisting of a Director General and five Directors. The work is carried out across five Offices:

- Office of Environmental Sustainability
- Office of Environmental Enforcement
- Office of Evidence and Assessment
- Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring
- Office of Communications and Corporate Services

The EPA is assisted by advisory committees who meet regularly to discuss issues of concern and provide advice to the Board.



# FOCUS ON LOCAL AUTHORITY ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT 2019 ACTIVITY REPORT

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil  
PO Box 3000, Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford, Ireland  
Telephone: +353 53 916 0600 Fax: +353 53 916 0699  
Email: [info@epa.ie](mailto:info@epa.ie) Website: [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)

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# 2019 Local Authority Environmental Enforcement Activity Highlights

## 2019 Highlights



Environmental Inspections

188,000



Environmental Licences/Permits/Certifications

>14,800



Environmental Enforcement Actions

22,800



Environmental Prosecutions  
(not including 1,200 litter prosecutions)

515+

## 2019 Local Authority Environmental Sectors

### Planning & Governance



Local authorities need to:

Continually monitor and evaluate progress towards the delivery of the national enforcement priorities.

### Waste



Local authorities need to:

Continue to strengthen data sharing to support enforcement against illegal operations.

Drive better waste segregation, especially in the commercial sector.

Maintain focus on other waste priorities including C&D, waste collectors and ELV/PRI.

### Water



Local authorities need to:

Ensure their resources are adequate to meet their statutory responsibilities.

Increase enforcement action.

Enforce drinking water standards in private supplies.

Maintain their monitoring role to inform action.

### Air & Noise



Local authorities need to:

Increase capacity for air and noise environmental protection.

Develop a coordinated regional enforcement approach.

Increase enforcement particularly in new 'low smoke zones'.



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## Executive Summary

From 2014 to 2018 the environmental enforcement performance of local authorities was measured using the EPA's Local Authority Performance Framework<sup>1</sup>. This framework was reviewed during 2020 to focus more specifically on national enforcement priorities and a new framework will be piloted in 2021. As we are moving from the existing framework to a new one, this report does not undertake an assessment based on the existing framework but does report on local authority activities in 2019. It also recommends actions required for improvement.

The EPA has seen an increase in the level of environmental enforcement activities of local authorities in 2019 with the number of environmental inspections growing to 188,000. This is due mostly to increasing numbers of waste inspections. The number of enforcement actions continued to grow with nearly 23,000 in 2019. The number of prosecutions remained similar to 2018, with 515 initiated in 2019. There was a significant increase in reporting of prosecutions for litter offences, with 1,200 litter prosecutions commenced in the year. Activities by local authorities are illustrated by maps throughout the report.

The volume of environmental complaints remained static but was very significant with over 78,000 received and managed by local authorities during the year. The majority of these related to waste and litter. Complaints per head of population are highest in the larger towns and cities and are lower in rural counties.

Staff numbers involved in environmental enforcement have recovered since 2015 with 480 staff in individual local authorities supported by shared services in waste and water.

On an annual basis, the national enforcement priorities for waste, water, air and noise enforcement are developed and disseminated to all local authorities. The EPA has seen progress with the integration of national enforcement priorities into local authority inspection plans. There is however, need for each authority to:

- ▲ Continually monitor and evaluate progress towards the delivery of agreed national priorities for air, noise, waste, and water enforcement.

In looking across the spectrum of environmental enforcement, waste followed by water are where most activities are focused. This is not surprising given the range of functions in these areas relative to air and noise enforcement. The EPA has previously recommended a regionalised approach to air and noise enforcement and welcomes that the Department and local authorities are considering this recommendation. In the interim, considering the importance of air quality and noise on human health, local authorities need to:

- ▲ Increase resourcing and develop capacity in air and noise enforcement to enhance protection of the environment and public health.

Progress has been seen with increasing regional and national cooperation in waste enforcement. Local authorities and other enforcement bodies (including WERLAs<sup>2</sup>, NTFSO<sup>3</sup> and NWCPO<sup>4</sup>) need to continue to strengthen their intelligence-led enforcement approach to identify and tackle illegal waste activities. This approach is dependent on the quality of waste data and its effective sharing. Local authorities pay significant attention to the national priorities including construction and demolition waste management, waste collection and end of life vehicles. The report recognises that a substantial level of routine regulatory enforcement is being done to maintain compliance levels, which is welcome. That being said, in seeking to move to a more circular economy, local authorities should:

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1 [www.epa.ie/enforcement/pa/performanceframework/](http://www.epa.ie/enforcement/pa/performanceframework/)  
 2 Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities  
 3 National Transfrontier Shipment Office  
 4 National Waste Collection Permit Office

- ▲ Continue to enhance the quality, timeliness and sharing of waste data to support effective enforcement against illegal operators.
- ▲ Drive better waste segregation, especially in the commercial sector, through a mix of promotional and enforcement actions.
- ▲ Maintain focus on enforcement of waste collectors (brown bin services), waste permitted sites, and producer responsibility obligations.

Local authorities have substantial water enforcement related responsibilities to protect both human health and the environment. The work they do to deliver their key role in national water monitoring is fundamental to inform their action and the actions of other stakeholders. That being said, water quality is declining nationally, and there is a small number of enforcement actions and prosecutions being taken by local authorities. Local authorities and their shared service (the Local Authority Waters Programme) need to work together to deliver on their water quality protection functions. Local authorities also have a key role in protecting public health by monitoring and enforcing the drinking water standards in all regulated private water supplies. Local authorities need to:

- ▲ Ensure the adequacy of their resources to meet their statutory water related responsibilities and increase enforcement action to protect both human health and the environment.
- ▲ Protect public health by monitoring and enforcing the drinking water standards in all regulated private water supplies.
- ▲ Maintain their key role in national water monitoring.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 31 local authorities implement more than 500 environmental protection requirements contained in over 100 pieces of environmental legislation to control and protect air quality, water quality and regulate waste management. In 2019, they enforced over 14,800 licences and permits, carried out 188,000 inspections and took almost 23,000 associated enforcement actions. Collectively they also handled over 78,000 environmental complaints during the year.

There is substantial work in planning to deliver this level of activity and each year, local authorities develop enforcement plans to allocate resources where they are most needed, based on the risk posed to the environment and on national and local priorities. National enforcement priorities are agreed annually for each thematic area, waste, water and air. The national waste enforcement priorities for 2019 included focussing on illegal waste activities, construction and demolition waste and waste capacity challenges. The focus of water activities was to target the improvement of water quality status, while air enforcement activities focused on inspections to protect public health. Further details of national enforcement priorities for the year are outlined in Appendix 1.

The local authorities inform the EPA of their enforcement plans and their planned levels of activity, and subsequently report on completed activities together with information on the outcomes attributed to the activities where possible. This is done to continually seek to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection functions. The purpose of this report is to document the environmental enforcement activities of the 31 local authorities in 2019, outline activities and outcomes relating to national priority areas and highlight areas for improvement. This report also looks at activities previously recommended for improvement by the EPA to see if they have been addressed. The 2018 report included recommendations relating to better segregation of waste at source, sharing of waste data, increasing farm and solid fuels inspections.

The national picture of environmental enforcement carried out by local authorities in 2019 is presented in Section 2. The thematic areas of, air/noise, waste and water are discussed in Sections 3.1 to 3.3. Appendix 2 provides further information on the national trends of local authority environmental activities.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

### Summary of Activities

There was an increase overall in the level of local authority inspection and enforcement activity in 2019. Table 1 summaries the level of activity and trends since 2018. Further figures are available in Appendix 2.

### Enforcement Planning

The quality of the local authority enforcement plans was generally good or excellent with county and city councils focusing resources on the national enforcement priorities. There was limited reported information on the outcomes of these efforts. This is not unexpected as the move towards a more outcome approach is relatively new. Reporting on activities and outcomes will be enhanced with the new performance framework via more qualitative reporting on the results of inspection and enforcement actions in the years ahead.

Activity	2018	2019	Trend
<b>Staff Resources for Environmental Functions</b>	470	480	<b>Slight increase from 2018</b> (+2%) 
<b>Environmental authorisations in place (licenses/ permits/ certificates)</b>	14,200	14,800	<b>Slight increase from 2018</b> (+4%). 
<b>Environmental complaints received</b>	78,400	78,000	<b>No significant trend</b> 
<b>Environmental Inspections undertaken</b>	168,000	188,000	<b>Increase from 2018</b> (+10%) 
<b>Environmental enforcement actions taken</b>	20,000	Approximately 22,900 actions	<b>Increase</b> (+12%) 
<b>Prosecutions initiated</b>	520+ (+350 litter prosecutions)	515+ (+~1,200 litter prosecutions)	<b>No significant trend</b> (does not include litter) 

**Table 1:** Local authority activities in 2019 v 2018.

### Staffing Levels

Local Authority staff numbers involved in environmental regulation have been recovering since 2015 and in 2019 were at 90% of 2008 levels. Certain roles have also been transferred to shared services operating on behalf of the whole local authority sector and in the case of waste enforcement these services play an increasing role in focusing enforcement efforts at local authority level. They also play a role in the co-ordination of multiagency actions and supporting a regional approach to enforcement activities in waste. There is ongoing consideration of implementing similar approaches in other environmental enforcement areas. Almost two thirds of environment staff work in waste and this is borne out by the much larger volume of waste inspections and enforcement action. Water environmental staff account for about one quarter of environment staff and other areas such as air quality and noise enforcement have limited resources.

### Permits and Authorisations

Local authorities authorise a diverse range of waste, water and air operations and emissions under various licensing, permitting or authorisation processes. The number of sites and operators authorised by local authorities increased by 5% in 2019 with a total of almost 15,000 authorisations granted, or in place.

### Complaints

Local authorities handled 78,000 environmental complaints in 2019. Over 90% of environmental complaints relate to litter and waste (Figure 1) with water, noise and air complaints making up the remaining 10%. A county breakdown is outlined in Figure 2.

Environmental Complaints Received 2019



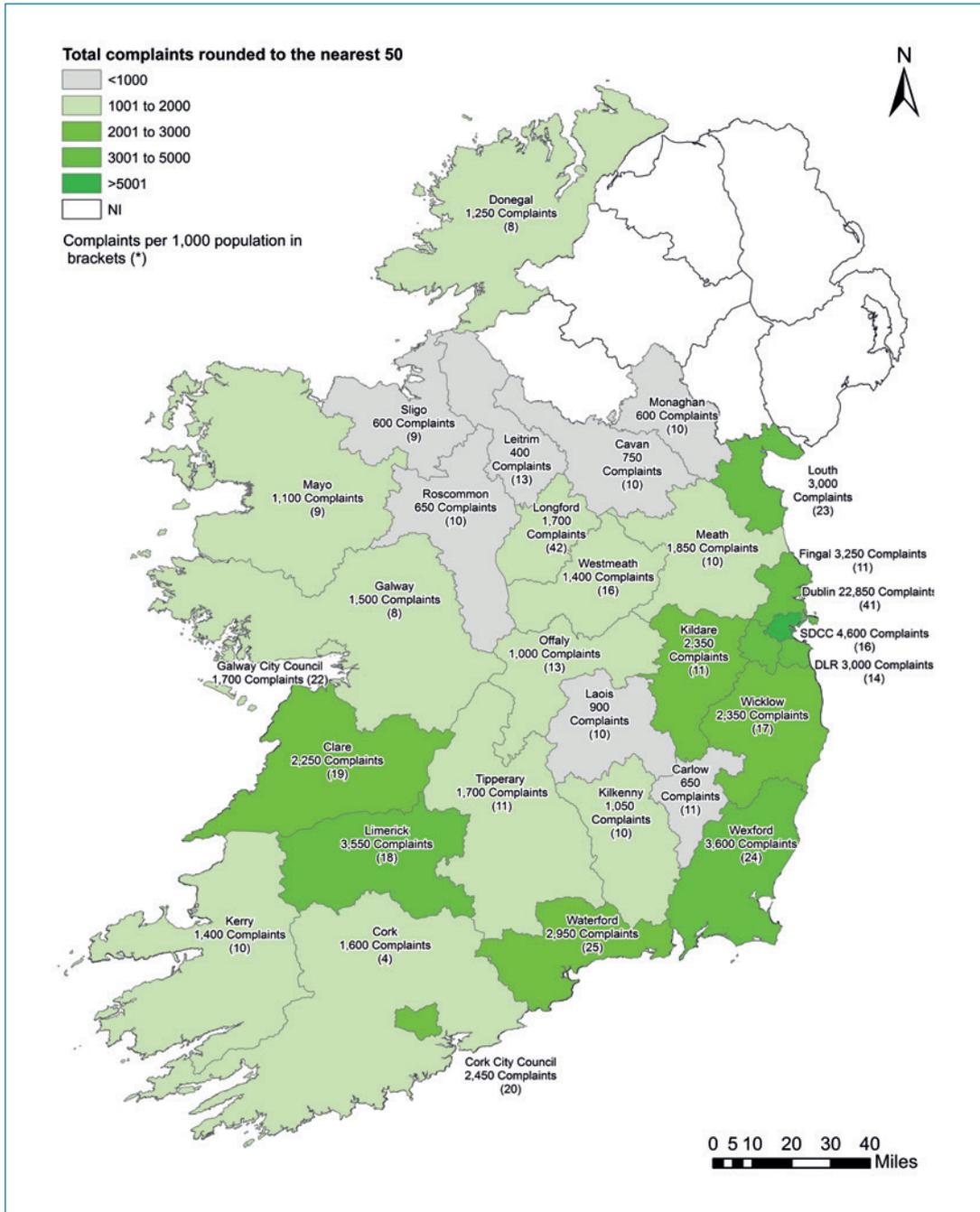
Figure 1: Environmental complaints received by local authorities in 2019

## Inspections

The total number of inspections carried out by local authorities increased by 10% in 2019 to 188,000 inspections, due mainly to an increase in waste inspection activity, which account for two thirds of all inspections. Overall water inspections showed an increase in 2019 compared to previous years with 42,500 routine inspections completed and a further 3,000 non-routine ones undertaken. Inspection numbers in relation to air and noise remain substantially lower.

## Enforcement Actions

The level of enforcement actions continues to increase with almost 23,000 actions in 2019. 90% of these related to waste and litter issues. Some examples that contributed to the increase include a Dublin City Council campaign against abandoned vehicles through enforcement actions, and a focused emphasis on the enforcement of food waste collection to householders, with Laois County Council having been very active on this in 2019. In addition, a continued increase in litter pollution fines (in particular in Cork City, Westmeath, Wicklow and Wexford) was seen.



**Figure 2:** Total complaints received by local authorities in 2019

### Prosecutions

In 2019, 517 legal actions were initiated compared to a similar level of around 520 actions in 2018. There was a significant increase in the number of litter prosecutions reporting with 1,200 litter prosecutions initiated compared to 350 in 2018. This significant increase is partly due to better reporting. Many of these litter prosecutions are taken where fixed penalty notices are not paid, with the prosecution being taken for the original offence.

### **Actions Required**

The EPA has seen progress with the integration of national enforcement priorities into local authority inspection plans. There is, however, need for each authority to continually monitor progress towards the delivery of these priorities. Local authorities need to not only assign resources based on national enforcement priorities but also evaluate and report on the effectiveness of their enforcement efforts and the outcomes achieved.

### 3. THEMATIC OVERVIEW

#### 3.1 Air & Noise Enforcement Activities

Although air quality in Ireland was generally good in 2019, there were exceedances of the air quality guidelines set by the World Health Organization at 33 monitoring stations. The burning of solid fuels (coal, peat and wet wood) continue to contribute to these localised high levels of particulate matter and PAH (a toxic chemical) in our cities, towns and villages. Poor air quality can have serious impacts on our overall health, with fine particulate matter especially impacting on our respiratory and cardiovascular health. The latest figures from the European Environment Agency estimate that in excess of 1,300 premature deaths occur in Ireland each year because of poor air quality. In addition, long term noise exposure is the second most significant environmental cause of ill health in Western Europe<sup>5</sup>.

#### Air Inspection Activities

Air enforcement inspections relate mainly to control of smoky fuel sales, regulation of solvent and commercial paint users and development of the ambient air monitoring network.

There was a 17% increase in the number of solid fuel inspections carried out by local authorities in 2019 compared with the previous year. Nine local authorities participated in 20 multi-agency inspections in relation to solid fuel enforcement. In addition, local authorities carried out over 100 different actions relating to educating, engaging and supplying information to further increase compliance.

Expansion of the Ambient Air Monitoring Programme<sup>6</sup> was identified as a National Priority for 2019 with 24 new stations being added to the national network and a further 3 sites upgraded during the year. This work was a collaboration between local authorities and the EPA. In addition, 1,432 inspections were undertaken by 21 local authorities as part of this programme.

The number of inspections in relation to the Decorative Paint Regulations at 456 in 2019 was similar to 2018 figures, while the number of Solvent Regulation related inspections decreased by 26%. Inspections in relation to the Petroleum Vapour Regulations increased by 47% compared to the previous year. The need for additional enforcement in this area was noted in the 2018 Performance Report<sup>7</sup>. 1,704 air and odour complaints were received by local authorities in 2019. 90% were investigated. A county breakdown of combined air and noise inspections is outlined in Figure 3.

<b>1,050+</b>	No. of inspections carried out under the solid fuel 1,050+ regulations (~900 in 2018)
<b>90%</b>	No. of compliant first-time inspections of fuel 90% merchants/retailers in 2019 (not measured in 2018)
<b>100+</b>	No. of solid fuel information/ engagement/education campaigns carried out in 2019

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organisation.

<sup>6</sup> A network of air quality monitoring stations located across the county, that is managed by the EPA, in partnership with local authorities and other bodies.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/enforcement/performanceframework/EPA%20LA%20ENV%202020%20v6.pdf>

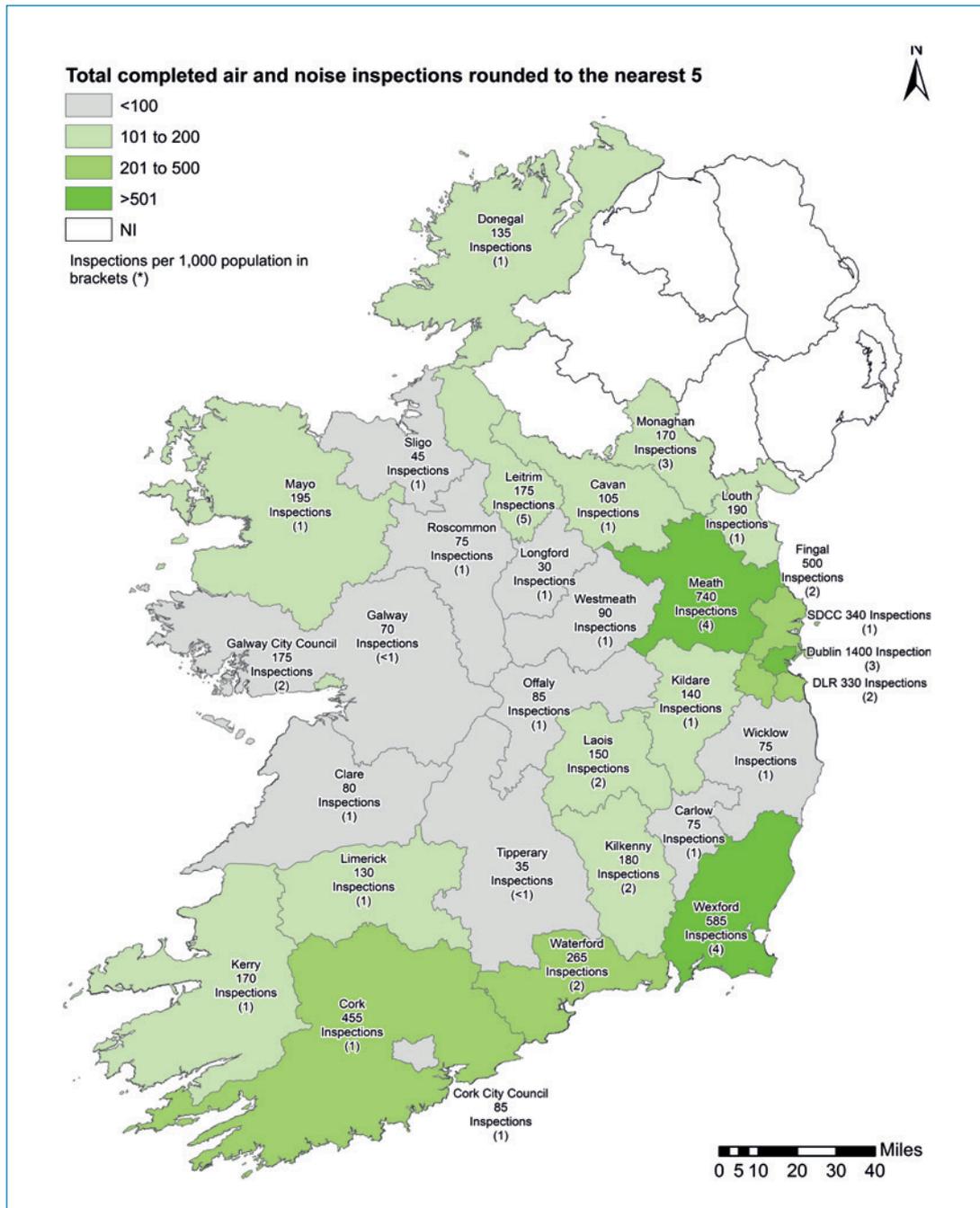


Figure 3: Total air & noise inspections carried out by local authorities in 2019

<b>131</b>	No. of inspections carried out under the Solvent Regulations (177 in 2018)
<b>456</b>	No. of inspections carried out under the Decorative Paint Regulations (450 in 2018)
<b>504</b>	No. of inspections carried out under the Petroleum Vapour Regulations (343 in 2018)
<b>550+</b>	No. of air enforcement actions (900+ in 2018)
<b>6</b>	6 Air prosecutions initiated in 2019 (decrease from 9 in 2018) 6 Fixed Payment Notices also issued under solid fuel regulations

### Air Enforcement Actions & Prosecutions

There were 567 air enforcement actions initiated during 2019. 6 prosecutions were initiated by Dublin City and Kerry, Limerick County Councils. This represents a 38% reduction in enforcement actions. A county breakdown of these actions and prosecutions is outlined in Figures 4 & 5.

### Noise Inspection Activities

The number of noise complaints has increased in recent years with entertainment, domestic, industrial/commercial activities and transport being the main sources. 1,717 noise related complaints were received by local authorities in 2019. 92% were investigated.

### Noise Enforcement Actions & Prosecutions

There was a significant reduction in the level of enforcement reported in relation to noise issues with a reduction from over 700 enforcement actions reported in 2018 to 278 enforcement actions reported in 2019. Two prosecutions were reported in 2019.

<b>270+</b>	No. of noise enforcement actions decreased (700 in 2018)
<b>2</b>	No. of noise prosecution actions initiated in 2019 same as in 2018)

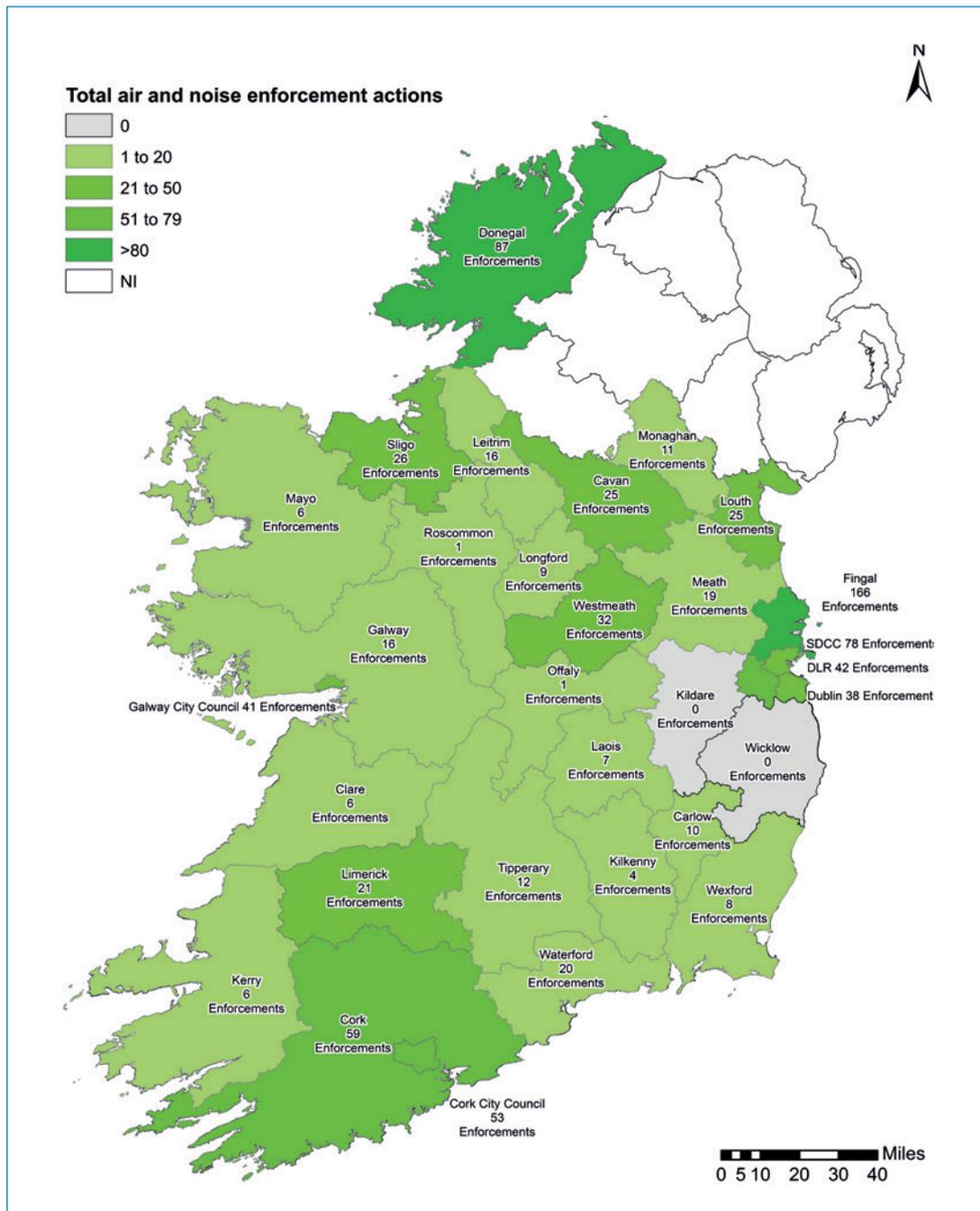


Figure 4: Total air & noise enforcement actions carried out by local authorities in 2019

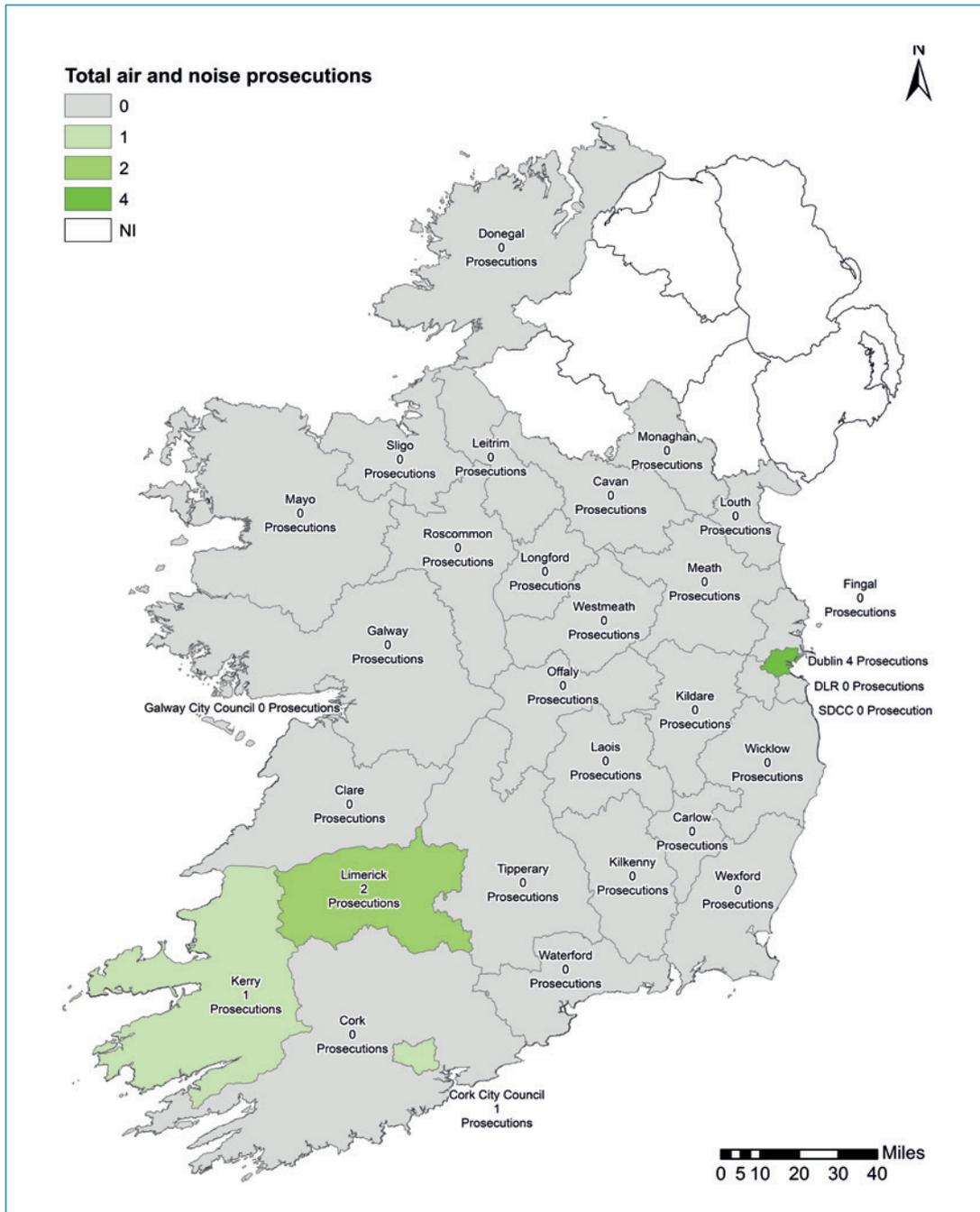


Figure 5: Total air & noise prosecution actions carried out by local authorities in 2019

## Actions Required

In looking across the spectrum of environmental enforcement activities of local authorities it is clear that waste enforcement followed by water enforcement are the areas where most enforcement activities are focused. This is not surprising given the range of functions in these areas relative to air and noise enforcement. EPA has previously recommended a regionalised approach to air and noise enforcement and welcomes that the Department and local authorities are considering this recommendation. However, considering the importance of air quality and noise on human health and well-being, more focus is now needed on air and noise legislation. Specifically, local authorities should:

- ▲ Assess the resources applied to their air and noise functions and determine an approach to strengthening their capacity for environmental protection in these areas. In this context, local authorities need to consider how to develop additional expertise in noise monitoring and enforcement.
- ▲ Collaborate to develop capacity and consistency in their approach to these areas of environmental protection until progress is made with a regional approach to air quality and noise enforcement. In particular, a collaborative approach should be employed to enforce the controlled use of approved solid fuels, especially in designated low smoke zones. This is particularly important currently with the recent introduction of additional new low smoke zones.

## 3.2 Waste Enforcement Activities

Local authorities play a vital role in the enforcement of waste legislation and good enforcement by local authorities can have a significant impact on the management of waste and can discourage illegal activity by the few. Coordination by the three regional WERLA offices has seen increased alignment on certain issues.

### Inspection Activities

Over 123,000 waste inspections were reported by local authorities in 2019. A county breakdown of these inspections is outlined in Figure 6. These included over 65,000 litter inspections and 27,000 routine inspections, which include waste permitted and authorised site inspections. This was a substantial increase in routine inspections compared to 2018, which was mainly due to large increases in Dublin City Council household waste inspections, and increased inspections by Leitrim and Meath County Councils with other smaller increases seen across many local authorities. Over 3,000 inspections were undertaken to assess compliance with producer responsibility obligations.

There was also over 28,000 non-routine inspections which was 50% higher than that seen in 2018. This was mainly due to a large increase in unauthorised waste inspections by South Dublin County Council with other smaller increases seen across many local authorities.

### Waste Enforcement Actions & Prosecutions

Local authorities did over 120,000 waste inspections in 2019 which included over 65,000 litter inspections. A number of them required enforcement action to address issues or non-compliances identified. In 2019, this led to over 10,000 individual enforcement actions and an additional 10,000 litter fixed penalty notices. A county breakdown of these actions and prosecutions is outlined in Figures 7 & 8. While it is positive that local authorities are actively monitoring compliance and taking action there is need for all waste generators to be more responsible for their own actions. Everyone should manage their wastes so that they do not give rise to littering or illegal waste activities and every business owner and household should manage their wastes via approved waste collectors or facilities to reduce the levels of littering and fly tipping.

<b>10,000+</b>	No. of waste enforcement actions (not including >10,100 litter fines)
<b>1,200</b>	1,200 litter prosecutions initiated in 2019 compared to 350 in 2018
<b>480+</b>	No. of waste prosecution actions initiated in 2019 (450 in 2018)

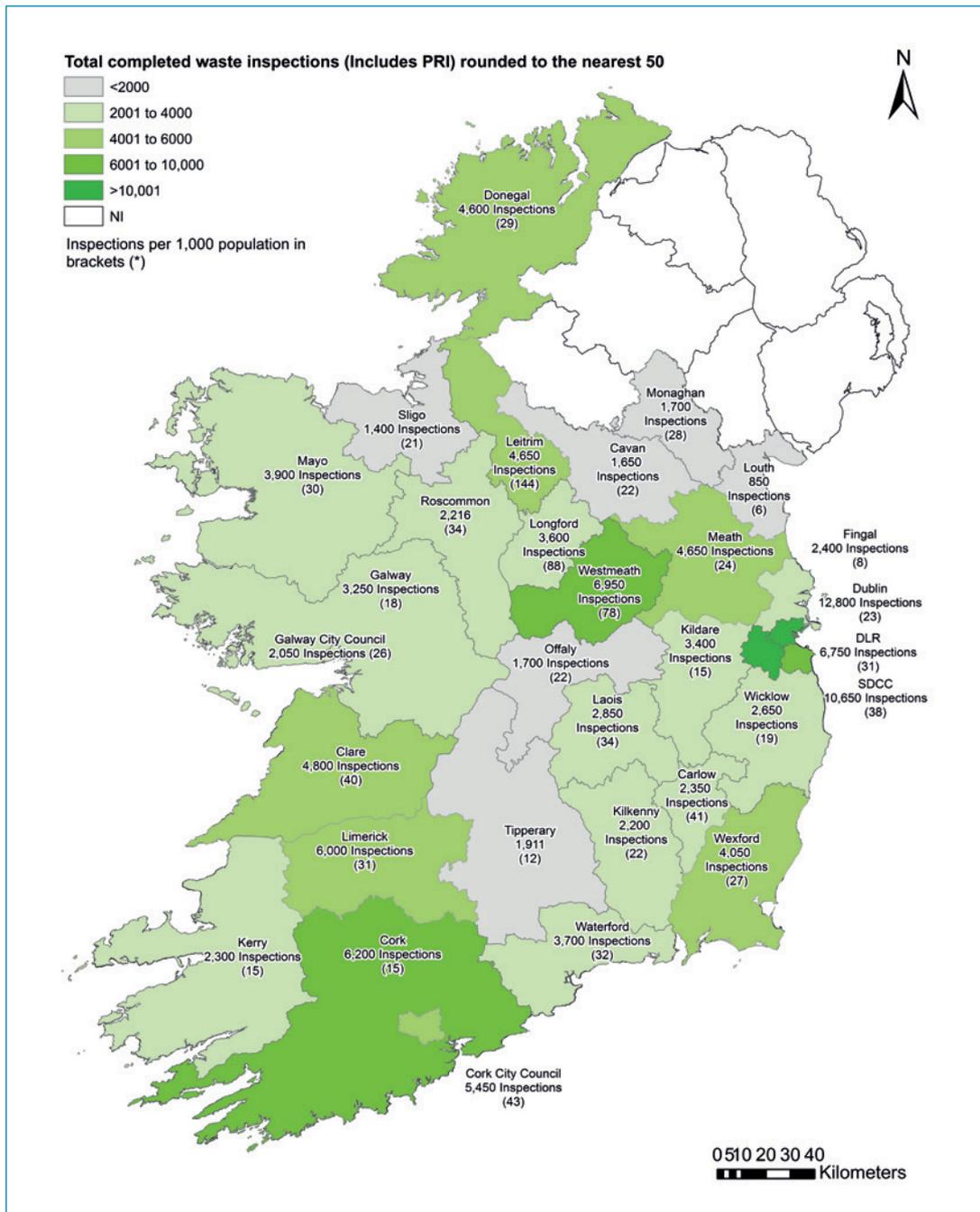


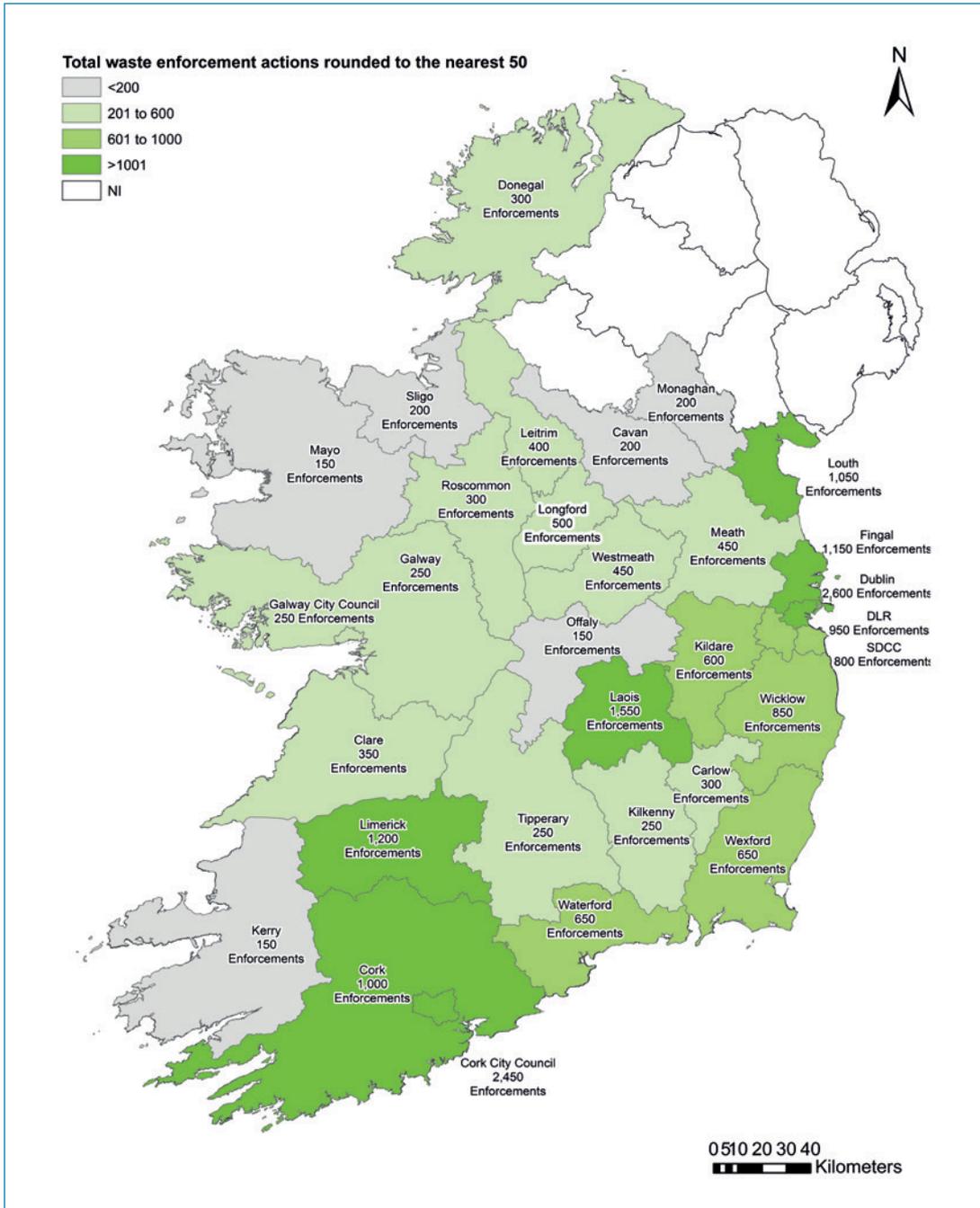
Figure 6: Total waste inspections carried out by local authorities in 2019

## Illegal dumping/unauthorised waste

Outcome and activity indicators show improved reporting, and positive progress in relation to certain national priority areas e.g. improved close out of Illegal dumping cases. It also shows significant resources are being expended by local authorities in tackling this priority e.g. increased waste enforcement activities in this area. 2019 has also seen a reduction in the numbers of protracted illegal dumping cases (i.e. open for more than 6 months) - from 1,130 open at the end of 2018 to 1,000 open at the end of 2019. This indicates that local authorities are continuing to focus on closing complaints which is positive. There has been a slight increase in the numbers of unauthorised waste activities identified. The reasons for this increase are uncertain, but the identification of these issues was a priority for 2019 and may indicate additional focus by the local authorities during the year.

<b>28,000+</b>	No. of non-routine waste inspections (including fly-tipping, backyard burning, unauthorised waste activities)
<b>3,500</b>	No. of Inspections of authorised waste operations (waste facility/waste collection permits)
<b>266</b>	No. of Multiagency inspections carried out (200 in 2018)
<b>40%</b>	% of illegal dumping cases open more than 6 months old at end of 2019  Improvement - Better reporting and fewer cases open (No. 1,000 vs 1,130 open in 2018)
<b>50</b>	No. of unauthorised waste facilities/activities (47 in 2018)
<b>89%</b>	Annual environmental report validation by local authorities up from 58% in 2018
<b>17</b>	No. of Waste facilities continuing to operate after their permits had expired (23 in 2018)

The enforcement priorities for 2021 have been defined and addressing unauthorised waste activities will remain a priority in 2021. In addition, the Government's Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy has identified this as an issue to be addressed, including the development of practical best practice guidance to support regulatory authorities in taking legal actions. The EPA is currently undertaking a study on waste crime that will inform future action in relation to these sites.



**Figure 7:** Total waste enforcement actions carried out by local authorities in 2019

Good progress is being made by local authorities in validating the annual environmental reports from authorised facilities. This is an important task which supports assessment of the movement of wastes along the waste management chain and can identify gaps in the reported management of wastes. EPA has noted some issues with the quality of validation and will be engaging with the relevant local authorities to seek improved quality in the validation process.

The number of waste permitted sites continuing to operate after their permits have expired has reduced in 2019.

The most significant changes in 2019 compared with previous years has been the increases in multi-agency inspections and the increase in unplanned inspections. 266 multi-agency inspections were undertaken in 2019 against 200 in the previous year. Such inspections have included environment/waste and planning sections of local authorities, National Parks & Wildlife, Department of Social Protection amongst others. This approach is highlighted within the Waste Action Plan and is being considered as a good practice that could be used in other areas of environmental regulation.

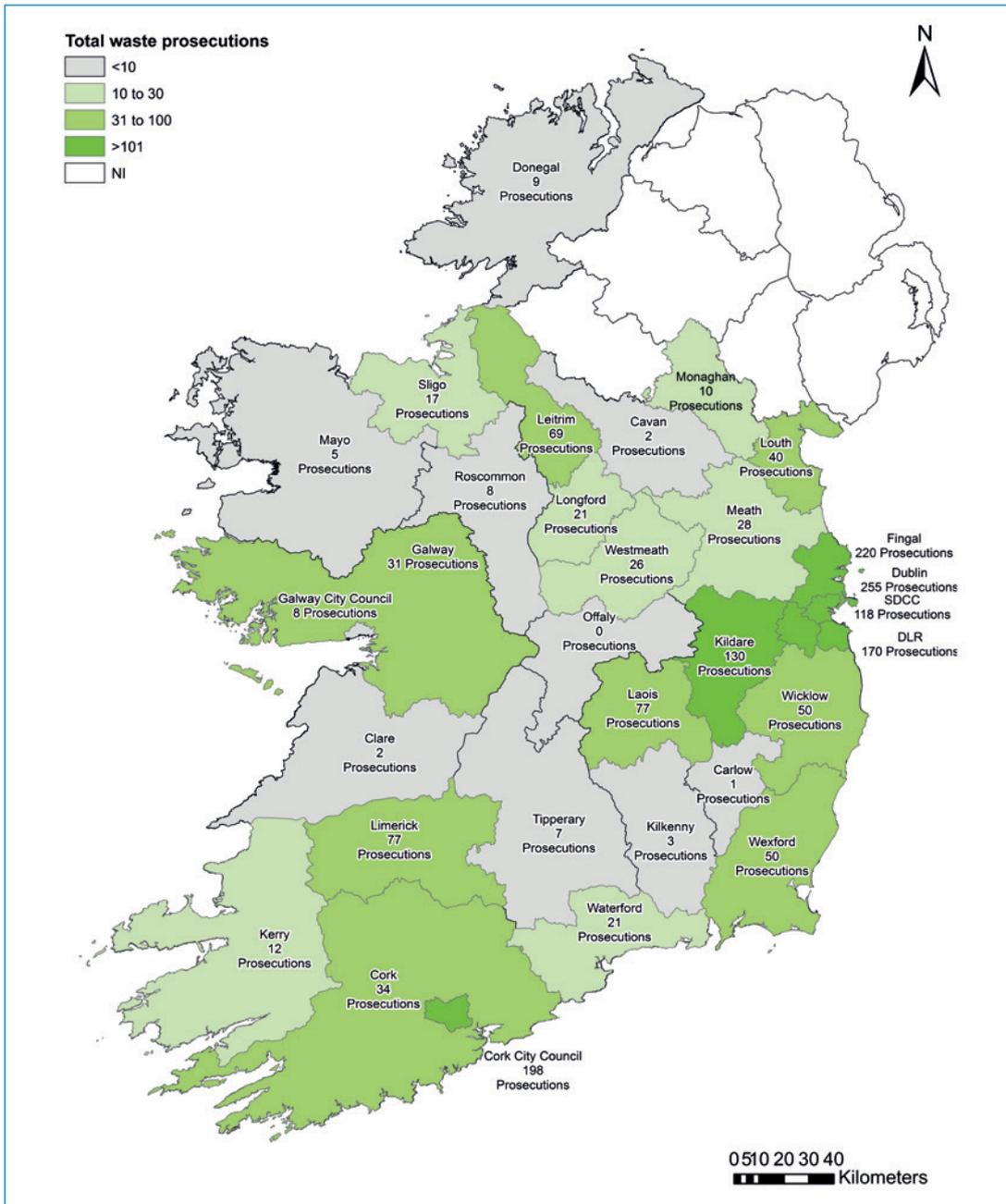
The number of unplanned inspections was very significant in 2019 with over 28,000 inspections. This emphasises the need to be responsive to issues in a timely manner but does indicate that there is significant non-compliance to be addressed in the waste sector.

### Management of Food Waste

Improved compliance on provision of brown bin service is welcomed, and significant resources are being expended in tackling this priority area particularly in the area of household waste surveys<sup>8</sup>. Organics remain the largest single component of non-household residual waste and its proportion has increased in commercial residual waste bins. Almost 70% of the content of the non-household residual waste bins could potentially be diverted either to recycling or to brown bins.

<b>8,500</b>	No. of household waste surveys (~3,000 in 2018)
<b>3,000</b>	No of. household and commercial food waste inspections (~2,500 in 2018)
<b>47%</b>	Compliance rate for first-time inspections of provision of brown bin service by waste collectors (36% in 2018)
<b>28%</b>	% of Household waste presentation inspections open more than 6 months at end of 2019. This is an increase but fewer cases open (from 4% in 2018)

8 These are carried out to reduce waste contamination and provide information/feedback to householders



**Figure 8:** Total waste prosecutions carried out by local authorities in 2019

There was an improved compliance rate with first time inspections<sup>9</sup> on waste presentation in relation to the provision of brown bin services in 2019 which is welcome. There is however a need to progress compliance and 28% of inspections were open for more than 6 months. However, overall performance was very positive in 2019 with a significant increase in inspections of households and commercial food waste outlets. Continuing this practice will be critical to ensuring the segregation of food waste to provide for its appropriate further management and to reduce the contamination of dry recyclables bins. There is still substantial work to be done to promote segregation of waste streams and this is a priority for 2021 with a particular focus on commercial food waste segregation at restaurants, hotels and food retailers.

<sup>9</sup> The compliance rate of first time inspections is an annual check– and gives an indication if a sector is improving or not

## Construction & Demolition waste

Just over 6.2 million tonnes of C&D waste were generated in Ireland in 2018 (77% soil and stones). The appropriate management of this high tonnage waste stream is important. Local authorities have carried out inspection and enforcement activities to ensure appropriate waste management practices at sites giving rise to construction and demolition waste. This metric (82% compliance on first-time inspection) indicates that this is having a positive impact, with better compliance levels being found at first time inspections. This also appears to be having a positive impact on the permitted sites receiving the C&D waste with a compliance rate of 80% being observed in 2019.

<b>950+</b>	No. of C&D handling inspections at development sites
<b>82%</b>	Compliance rate for first time-inspections (670) of C&D sites (60% of 579 insp in 2018)
<b>80%</b>	Compliance rate for first-time inspections (536) with conditions of waste collection permit (56% in 2018)

The improved compliance rate observed in this area is welcomed. Local authorities should ensure that inspection plans target large tonnage construction and demolition operations for inspection and enforcement. This will ensure that on-going good compliance observed will be representative of the wider C&D sector.

## Producer Responsibility<sup>10</sup>

Over 3,000 inspections were undertaken in 2019 in relation to Producer Responsibility. There has been good uptake of compliance scheme membership. For example, there are now over 2,900 retail members of the Repak End of Life Tyre scheme. Local authorities undertook inspections of unauthorised tyre activities in 2019 and the number of unregistered retailers decreased from 190 to 110 over the year. While there is still focus required on this sector, the majority of large volume retailers are now part of the scheme.

<b>3,000+</b>	No. of Producer Responsibility Inspections (including WEEE, Batteries, Packaging, Tyres and End of Life Vehicles)
<b>2,900</b>	No. of Retailers members of the Repak End of Life Tyre scheme (2,600 in 2018)
<b>165</b>	No. of unregistered tyre retailers regularised by Local authorities through registration with Repak ELT (410 in 2018)
<b>110</b>	No. of unregistered tyre retailers (190 in 2018)
<b>350</b>	No. of inspections of authorised ELV facilities
<b>100+</b>	No. of Inspections of unauthorised tyre activities

<sup>10</sup> PRIs allow product producers to develop schemes to ensure products they produce are managed responsibly

## Actions required

Progress has been seen with increasing regional and national cooperation in waste enforcement. There is also a substantial level of routine regulatory enforcement being done to maintain compliance levels as evidenced by the inspection and enforcement activities reported. An improved annual environmental report validation rate by local authorities is welcomed (further attention is needed on the quality of such validation). That being said, in seeking to move to a more circular economy, additional work is required. Specifically, local authorities and other relevant bodies need to:

- ▲ Continue to strengthen their intelligence-led and multi-agency enforcement approach to identify and tackle illegal waste activities and address sites.
- ▲ Continue to improve the quality, timeliness and effective sharing of waste management data to provide critical intelligence to ensure that illegal waste activities can be detected and prevented. In particular, the sharing of information on illegal sites is critical to address these difficult sites.
- ▲ Employ a mix of educational and enforcement actions to drive improvements in waste segregation with a current focus on commercial waste generation.
- ▲ Maintain current compliance via ongoing inspection and enforcement across the range of their waste enforcement functions including compliance on waste collectors (driving improved compliance for provision of brown bin services), waste permitted sites, and producer responsibility obligations.
- ▲ Drive improved compliance rates in C&D sector, in particular targeting large tonnage construction and demolition operations for inspection and enforcement.

### 3.3 Water Enforcement Activities

The Water Quality in Ireland Report for the period 2013-2018<sup>11</sup> found that only 53% of rivers and 50% of lakes were found to be of satisfactory quality. Since the last full assessment, river water quality has declined. As set out above, the level of local authority water protection and enforcement activities is less than in waste enforcement.

#### Sampling and Monitoring

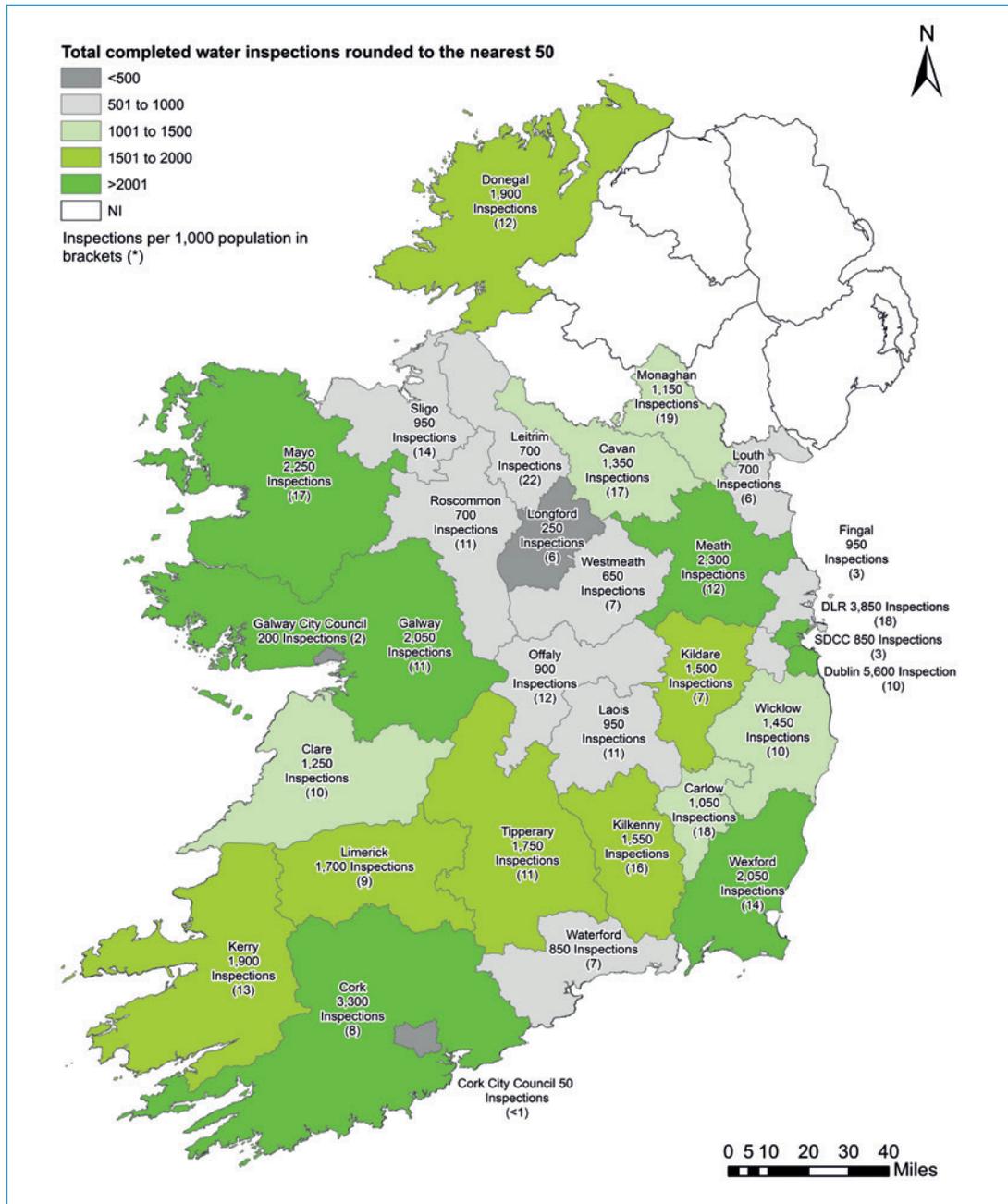
EPA and the local authorities collaborate in relation to the national monitoring programme for water quality under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) with the local authorities undertaking the sampling activities and the EPA providing analysis of the samples taken. This approach continued in 2019 with over 99% of the programme being delivered. The information from this monitoring programme is critical to the assessment of our water environment and the focusing of resources to investigate and seek action to address water quality issues. The Local Authorities Water Programme (LAWPRO) is a shared service that supports the local authorities in their sector's role under the WFD. There has continued to be good collaboration between the shared services and the local authorities via the regional committees and directly.

#### Inspection activities

Over 46,000 water inspections were recorded by local authorities in 2019. These included over 42,000 routine inspections, which include inspections of discharge licenses, farms, private drinking water supplies, septic tanks, WFD monitoring and bathing waters. There were also over 4,200 non-routine inspections recorded by local authorities in 2019. These include pollution incidents and complaints. The number of water inspections in 2019 increased compared with 2018 when over 38,000 total water inspections were undertaken. Most of this increase is as a result of additional data reported on monitoring of private drinking supplies and a significant increase in sewer misconnection surveys. A county breakdown of these inspections is outlined in Figure 9.

<b>46,000+</b>	Total number of routine and non-routine water inspections undertaken by local authorities in 2019 (38,000+ in 2018)
<b>4,200+</b>	Water pollution incidents investigated (4,400+ in 2018)
<b>3,800+</b>	Farm inspections (3,700+ in 2018)
<b>2,300+</b>	Inspections and monitoring of discharge licences (2,400+ in 2018)

11 <https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/waterqua/waterqualityinireland2013-2018.html>



**Figure 9:** Total water inspections carried out by local authorities in 2019

It is noteworthy that local authorities completed 1,160 domestic wastewater treatment system (septic tank) inspections in line with the National Inspection Plan<sup>12</sup> in 2019. In addition, Dublin City Council and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council allocated significant resources to the investigation of sewer misconnections with almost 8,000 inspections undertaken between both Councils in 2019.

12 <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/wastewater/dwvtsinspectionsandenforcement2019.html>

## Water enforcement & prosecutions actions

Local authorities water incident and complaint investigations led to over 1,500 individual enforcement actions initiated in 2019 resulting in the commencement of 26 water prosecutions. While the number of enforcement actions has remained static compared to 2018 the number of prosecutions has reduced. A county breakdown of these actions and prosecutions is outlined in Figures 10 & 11. More action is needed to address the current declines in water quality.

It is up to householders to ensure that their septic tanks are maintained and in proper working order; to industries to ensure any discharges to waters are in compliance with a license; and, to farmers ensure that their farms are managed in accordance with the appropriate regulations.

<b>1,500+</b>	No. of water enforcement actions (1,400+ in 2018)
<b>26</b>	No. of water prosecution actions initiated in 2019 (decrease from 50 in 2018)

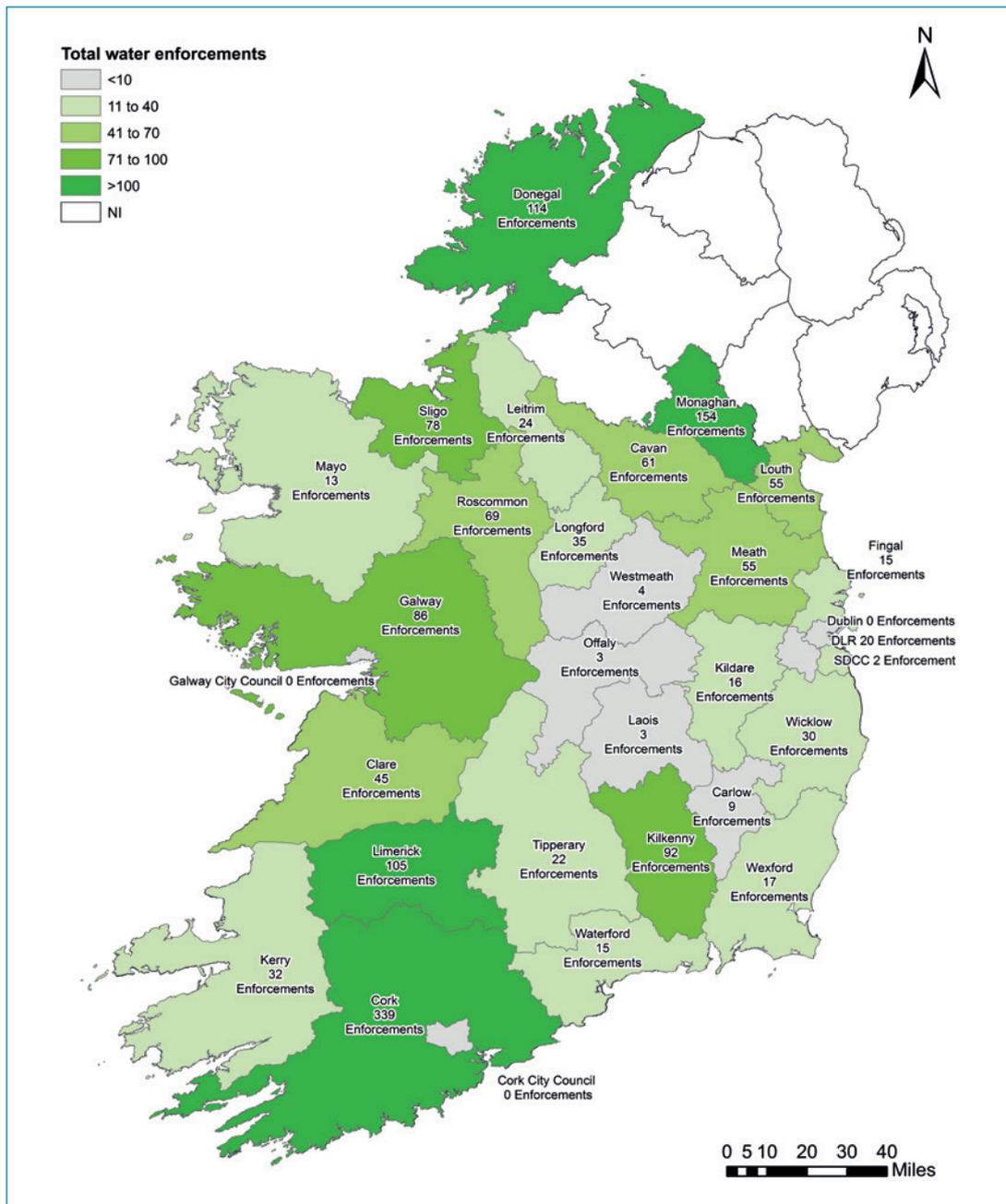


Figure 10: Total water enforcement actions carried out by local authorities in 2019

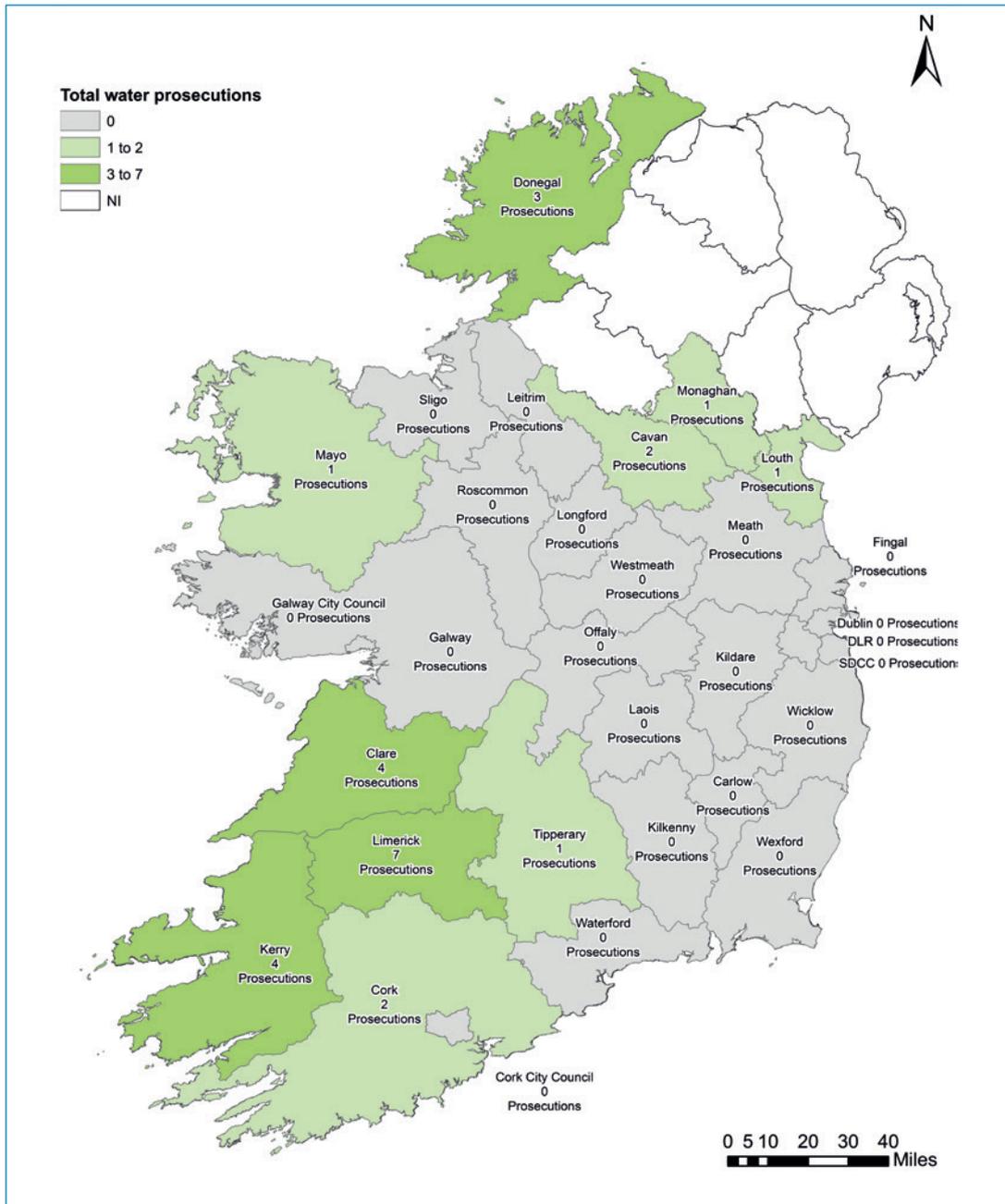


Figure 11: Total water prosecutions actions carried out by local authorities in 2019

## Actions required

In relation to water quality, local authorities have a key role in national water monitoring as quality data is fundamental to inform their action and the actions of other stakeholders. They also have a significant number of environmental regulatory functions in relation to business and farming enterprises and more generally in relation to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. Ambient water quality continues to decline nationally due to a range of pressures and local authorities working in collaboration with the EPA and Department have a very significant role to play in the protecting and improving water quality. Local authorities also have a key role in protecting public health in regulated private water supplies and it is clear that compliance in private water supplies continue to lag behind that of public water supplies. In order to deliver on these responsibilities, local authorities and their shared service (the Local Authority Waters Programme) need to deliver on their water quality protection functions. Specifically, local authorities need to:

- ▲ Ensure the adequacy of their resources to meet their statutory water responsibilities.
- ▲ Actively collaborate with their shared service to deliver their water quality protection and restoration functions. In particular where the local authority is advised of a significant decline in water quality under the Red Dot+ programme investigations should be undertaken.
- ▲ Maintain their key role in WFD monitoring, bathing water monitoring, and investigative monitoring
- ▲ Monitor all private water supplies and enforce the drinking water standards where monitoring identifies non-compliance to better protect human health.

## Appendix 1 – National Environmental Enforcement Priorities for 2019

### Waste Enforcement

#### ***Illegal dumping and unaccounted for waste.***

- 1.1. Multiagency response for sites or operators engaging in significant level of illegal activity
- 1.2. Illegal dumping and unauthorised movement of waste

#### ***Construction and Demolition activity and capacity challenges***

- 1.3. Brown bin roll out
- 1.4. Enforcement of C&D waste activities
- 1.5. Misclassification of waste and monitoring of waste movements

#### ***Dealing with sites containing illegally deposited waste***

- 1.6. Identify and take enforcement action on sites which contain waste deposited without authorisations

### Water Enforcement

#### ***Improving Water Status in all waterbodies***

- 2.1. WFD monitoring and Bathing Water monitoring
- 2.2. Water quality complaints and incidents
- 2.3. Farm inspections (“At Risk” water bodies)
- 2.4. Monitoring and enforcement of Section 4 Licences
- 2.5. Inspection of Septic tanks (as per National Inspection Plan)
- 2.6. Resource for engagement and referrals from Local Authorities Waters Programme and local catchment assessments

### Air Enforcement

#### ***To protect Public Health and to improve and maintain Air Quality***

- 3.1. Solid fuels: Compliance of fuel merchants, retailers and householders
- 3.2. Air and Noise Control (complaints)
- 3.3. Air and Noise Control (planning): assessment and conditioning of planning permissions in relation to air/noise regulation
- 3.4. Extension of Ambient Air Monitoring Programme

## Appendix 2 – Overview of activity trends

This section provides a broad outline of the context in which local authorities operate. It gives an idea of the workload volume in enforcement and inspection of environmental regulations required of a local authority.

**Table:** Summary of National Environmental Enforcement and Inspection Data, 2017 - 2019.

Total Number	2017	2018	2019
Licenses/Permits/Certificates	~14,100	~14,200	~14,800
Inspections undertaken	~155,000	~168,000	~188,000
Environmental Complaints Received	~67,000	~78,000	~78,000
Enforcement Actions Taken	~16,100	~20,000	~22,900
Prosecution Actions Initiated	480 <sup>13</sup>	520 <sup>14</sup>	517 <sup>15</sup>
Waste	2017	2018	2019
Illegal Dumping Inspections	13,869	12,664	21,099
Multi-agency Inspections	203	200	266
Household waste surveys	3,495	3,092	8,491
Commercial Food Waste Inspections	1,272	1,299	1,476
C&D Handling Inspections	508	746	973
Litter Patrols	48,703	51,847	48,870
Waste Collection Permit Inspections	643	1,656	1,898
% Completion of Waste Collection Permit Data Verification	- <sup>16</sup>	57%	89%
Producer Responsibility Initiatives	2017	2018	2019
WEEE Inspections	718	581	602
Battery Inspections	880	686	707
Tyre PRI Inspections	1,260	947	611
ELV Inspections	176	305	349
Water	2017	2018	2019
WFD Monitoring and investigations <sup>17</sup>	14,877	12,100	14,905
Water pollution incidents/complaints investigations	4,525	4,470	4,250
Farm Inspections	3,745	3,701	3,878
Inspections required in Septic Tank National Inspection Plan	1,124	1,247	1,160
Discharge Licenses (S4) Inspections	2,611	2,447	2,374

13 Not including 194 litter prosecutions

14 Not including 350 litter prosecutions

15 Not including ~1,200 litter prosecutions

16 Data not available in 2017

17 This includes the WFD monitoring programme, sampling programme and WFD assessments undertaken by local authorities including investigative assessments such as small stream risk scores or surveys.

<b>Total Number</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Air</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Solid Fuel Regulation Inspections	1,092	903	1,053
Decorative Paint Regulation Inspections	509	450	456
Petroleum Vapour Regulation Inspections	334	343	504
Solvent Regulation Inspections	172	177	131
<b>Enforcement Actions Initiated</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Waste Enforcement Actions	13,387	16,943	20,485
Water/Wastewater Enforcement Actions	1,265	1,434	1,512
Air Enforcement Actions	875	907	567
Noise Enforcement Actions	573	697	278
PRI Enforcement Actions	17	28	9
<b>Total Enforcement Actions Initiated</b>	<b>16,117</b>	<b>20,009</b>	<b>22,851</b>
<b>Prosecution Actions Initiated</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Waste Prosecution Actions <sup>18</sup>	444	460	483
Water/Wastewater Prosecution Actions	30	50	26
Air Prosecution Actions	4	9	6
Noise Prosecution Actions	1	2	2
<b>Total Prosecutions Initiated</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>517</b>

<sup>18</sup> Does not include litter prosecutions.



# AN GHNÍOMHAIREACTH UM CHAOMHNÚ COMHSHAOIL

Tá an GCC freagrach as an gcomhshaol a chosaint agus a fheabhsú, mar shócmhainn luachmhar do mhuintir na hÉireann. Táimid tiomanta do dhaoine agus don chomhshaol a chosaint ar thionchar díobhálach na radaíochta agus an truaillithe.

## Is féidir obair na Gníomhaireachta a roinnt ina trí phríomhréimse:

**Rialáil:** *Rialáil agus córais chomhlíonta comhshaoil éifeachtacha a chur i bhfeidhm, chun dea-thorthaí comhshaoil a bhaint amach agus díriú orthu siúd nach mbíonn ag cloí leo.*

**Eolas:** *Sonraí, eolas agus measúnú ardchaighdeáin, spriocdhírthe agus tráthúil a chur ar fáil i leith an chomhshaoil chun bonn eolais a chur faoin gcinnteoireacht.*

**Abhcióideacht:** *Ag obair le daoine eile ar son timpeallachta glaine, táirgíúla agus dea-chosanta agus ar son cleachtas inbhuanaithe i dtaobh an chomhshaoil.*

## I measc ár gcuid freagrachtaí tá:

### Ceadúnú

- Gníomhaíochtaí tionscail, dramhaíola agus stórála peitрил ar scála mór;
- Sceitheadh fuíolluisce uirbigh;
- Úsáid shrianta agus scaoileadh rialaithe Orgánach Géinmhodhnaithe;
- Foinsí radaíochta ianúcháin;
- Astaíochtaí gás ceaptha teasa ó thionscal agus ón eitlíocht trí Scéim an AE um Thrádáil Astaíochtaí.

### Forfheidhmiú Náisiúnta i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaoil

- Iniúchadh agus cigireacht ar shaoráidí a bhfuil ceadúnas acu ón GCC;
- Cur i bhfeidhm an dea-chleachtais a stiúradh i ngníomhaíochtaí agus i saoráidí rialáilte;
- Maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar fhreagrachtaí an údaráis áitiúil as cosaint an chomhshaoil;
- Caighdeán an uisce óil phoiblí a rialáil agus údaruithe um sceitheadh fuíolluisce uirbigh a fhorfheidhmiú
- Caighdeán an uisce óil phoiblí agus phríobháidigh a mheasúnú agus tuairiscíú air;
- Comhordú a dhéanamh ar líonra d'eagraíochtaí seirbhíse poiblí chun tacú le gníomhú i gcoinne coireachta comhshaoil;
- An dlí a chur orthu siúd a bhriseann dlí an chomhshaoil agus a dhéanann dochar don chomhshaol.

### Bainistíocht Dramhaíola agus Ceimiceáin sa Chomhshaol

- Rialacháin dramhaíola a chur i bhfeidhm agus a fhorfheidhmiú lena n-áirítear saincheisteanna forfheidhmithe náisiúnta;
- Staitisticí dramhaíola náisiúnta a ullmhú agus a fhoilsiú chomh maith leis an bPlean Náisiúnta um Bainistíocht Dramhaíola Guaisí;
- An Clár Náisiúnta um Chosc Dramhaíola a fhorbairt agus a chur i bhfeidhm;
- Reachtaíocht ar rialú ceimiceán sa timpeallacht a chur i bhfeidhm agus tuairiscíú ar an reachtaíocht sin.

### Bainistíocht Uisce

- Plé le struchtúir náisiúnta agus réigiúnacha rialachais agus oibriúcháin chun an Chreat-treoir Uisce a chur i bhfeidhm;
- Monatóireacht, measúnú agus tuairiscíú a dhéanamh ar chaighdeán aibhneacha, lochanna, uiscí idirchreasa agus cósta, uiscí snámha agus screamhuisce chomh maith le tomhas ar leibhéil uisce agus sreabhadh abhann.

### Eolaíocht Aeráide & Athrú Aeráide

- Fardail agus réamh-mheastacháin a fhoilsiú um astaíochtaí gás ceaptha teasa na hÉireann;

- Rúnaíocht a chur ar fáil don Chomhairle Chomhairleach ar Athrú Aeráide agus tacaíocht a thabhairt don Idirphlé Náisiúnta ar Gníomhú ar son na hAeráide;

- Tacú le gníomhaíochtaí forbartha Náisiúnta, AE agus NA um Eolaíocht agus Beartas Aeráide.

## Monatóireacht & Measúnú ar an gComhshaol

- Córais náisiúnta um monatóireacht an chomhshaoil a cheapadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm: teicneolaíocht, bainistíocht sonraí, anailís agus réamhaisnéisiú;
- Tuairiscí ar Staid Thimpeallacht na hÉireann agus ar Tháscairí a chur ar fáil;
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar chaighdeán an aeir agus Treoir an AE i leith Aeir Ghlain don Eoraip a chur i bhfeidhm chomh maith leis an gCoinbhinsiún ar Aerthruaillíú Fadraoin Trasteorann, agus an Treoir i leith na Teorann Náisiúnta Astaíochtaí;
- Maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar chur i bhfeidhm na Treorach i leith Torainn Timpeallachta;
- Measúnú a dhéanamh ar thionchar pleananna agus clár beartaithe ar chomhshaol na hÉireann.

## Taighde agus Forbairt Comhshaoil

- Comhordú a dhéanamh ar ghníomhaíochtaí taighde comhshaoil agus iad a mhaoiniú chun brú a aithint, bonn eolais a chur faoin mbeartas agus réitigh a chur ar fáil;
- Comhoibriú le gníomhaíocht náisiúnta agus AE um thaighde comhshaoil.

## Cosaint Raideolaíoch

- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar leibhéil radaíochta agus nochtadh an phobail do radaíocht ianúcháin agus do réimsí leictreamaighnéadacha a mheas;
- Cabhrú le pleananna náisiúnta a fhorbairt le haghaidh éigeandálaí ag eascairt as taismí núicléacha;
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar fhorbairtí thar lear a bhaineann le saoráidí núicléacha agus leis an tsábháilteacht raideolaíochta;
- Sainseirbhísí um chosaint ar an radaíocht a sholáthar, nó maoirsiú a dhéanamh ar sholáthar na seirbhísí sin.

## Treoir, Ardú Feasachta agus Faisnéis Inrochtana

- Tuairiscíú, comhairle agus treoir neamhspleách, fianaise-bhunaithe a chur ar fáil don Rialtas, don tionscal agus don phobal ar ábhair maidir le cosaint comhshaoil agus raideolaíoch;
- An nasc idir sláinte agus folláine, an geilleagar agus timpeallacht ghlan a chur chun cinn;
- Feasacht comhshaoil a chur chun cinn lena n-áirítear tacú le hiompraíocht um éifeachtúlacht acmhainní agus aistriú aeráide;
- Tástáil radóin a chur chun cinn i dtithe agus in ionaid oibre agus feabhsúchán a mholadh áit is gá.

## Compháirtíocht agus Líonrú

- Oibriú le gníomhaireachtaí idirnáisiúnta agus náisiúnta, údaráis réigiúnacha agus áitiúla, eagraíochtaí neamhrialtais, comhlachtaí ionadaíochta agus ranna rialtais chun cosaint comhshaoil agus raideolaíoch a chur ar fáil, chomh maith le taighde, comhordú agus cinnteoireacht bunaithe ar an eolaíocht.

## Bainistíocht agus struchtúr na Gníomhaireachta um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

Tá an GCC á bainistiú ag Bord lánaimseartha, ar a bhfuil Ard-Stiúrthóir agus cúigear Stiúrthóir. Déantar an obair ar fud cúig cinn d'Oifigí:

- An Oifig um Inbhuanaitheacht i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaoil
- An Oifig Forfheidhmithe i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaoil
- An Oifig um Fhianaise agus Measúnú
- An Oifig um Chosaint ar Radaíocht agus Monatóireacht Comhshaoil
- An Oifig Cumarsáide agus Seirbhísí Corparáideacha

Tugann coistí comhairleacha cabhair don Gníomhaireacht agus tagann siad le chéile go rialta le plé a dhéanamh ar ábhair imní agus le comhairle a chur ar an mBord.



Environmental Protection Agency  
*An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil*

**Headquarters**

**PO Box 3000,  
Johnstown Castle Estate  
County Wexford, Ireland**

**T: +353 53 916 0600  
F: +353 53 916 0699  
E: [info@epa.ie](mailto:info@epa.ie)  
W: [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)  
LoCall: 1890 33 55 99**

**Regional Inspectorate**

McCumiskey House,  
Richview, Clonskeagh Road,  
Dublin 14, Ireland

T: +353 1 268 0100  
F: +353 1 268 0199

**Regional Inspectorate**

Inniscarra, County Cork,  
Ireland

T: +353 21 487 5540  
F: +353 21 487 5545

**Regional Inspectorate**

Seville Lodge, Callan Road,  
Kilkenny, Ireland

T +353 56 779 6700  
F +353 56 779 6798

**Regional Inspectorate**

John Moore Road, Castlebar  
County Mayo, Ireland

T +353 94 904 8400  
F +353 94 902 1934

**Regional Inspectorate**

The Glen, Monaghan, Ireland

T +353 47 77600  
F +353 47 84987

**Regional Offices**

The Civic Centre  
Church St., Athlone  
Co. Westmeath, Ireland  
T +353 906 475722

Room 3, Raheen Conference Centre,  
Pearse House, Pearse Road  
Raheen Business Park, Limerick,  
Ireland

T +353 61 224764

