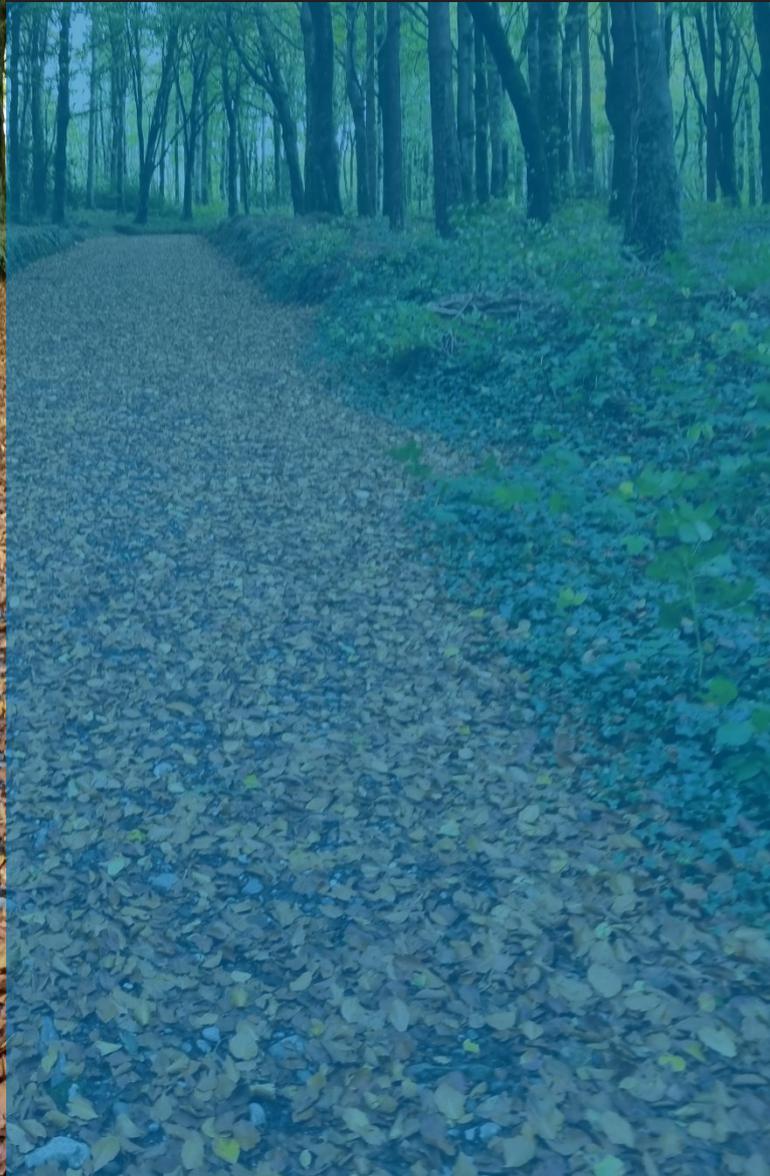
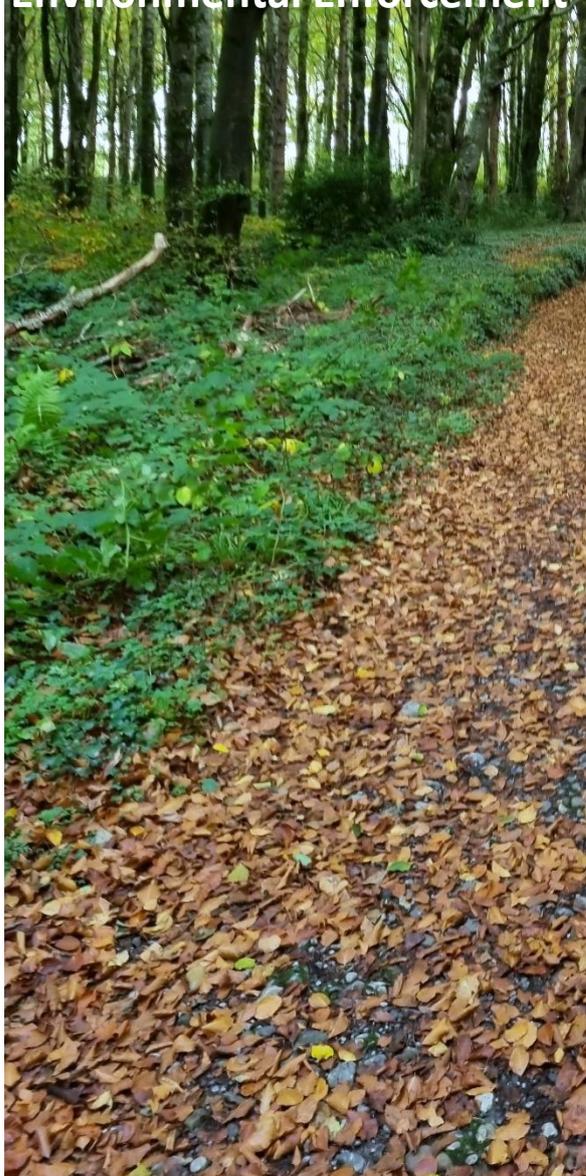




Environmental Protection Agency
Ανεξάρτητο Αρχείο του Υπουργείου Περιβάλλοντος

Focus on Local Authority Environmental Enforcement

Activity Report 2020



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
ACTIVITY REPORT 2020

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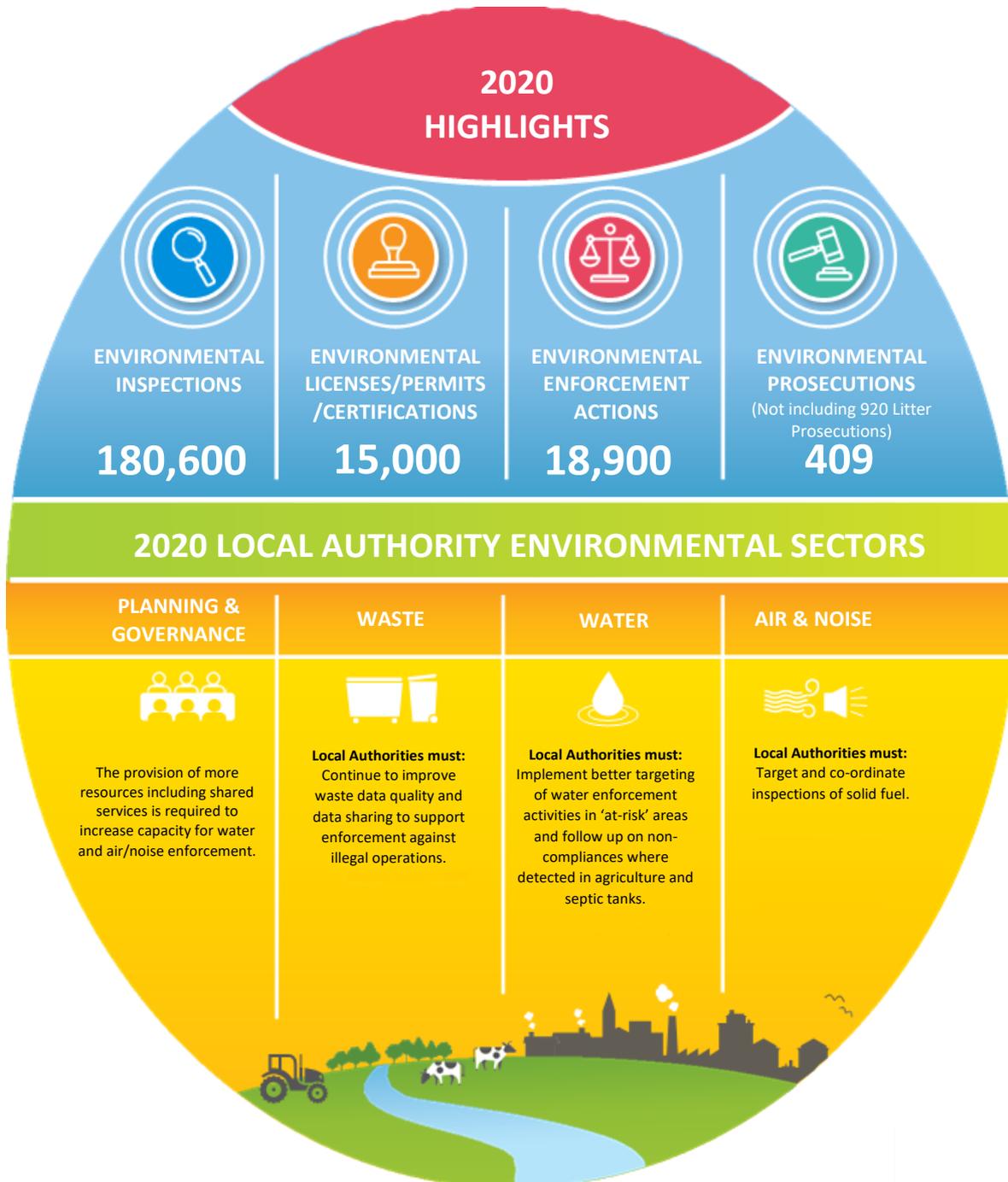
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2020 Local Authority Environmental Enforcement Activity Highlights



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Executive Summary

The EPA's Local Authority Performance Framework has been reviewed over the last two years. The new framework focusses on National Enforcement Priorities (NEPs) and will be used to assess local authority plans and reports submitted in 2021. This activity report serves as an interim report while the transition to the updated performance framework takes place.

The impact of COVID-19 restrictions imposed from March 2020 caused significant disruption across all sectors of society and presented unique and difficult challenges to local authorities in the implementation of their RMCEI/enforcement plans. These restrictions inevitably led to a decline in enforcement activity when compared with 2019, however, the EPA acknowledges the efforts of local authorities in carrying out their duties effectively throughout a challenging year.

In 2020, staff numbers involved in environmental enforcement across all local authorities increased to just under 500 staff, continuing the upward trend of recent years but still below 2008 staffing levels. A slight decrease in overall environment inspections undertaken in 2020 is seen (180,000 inspections compared to 188,000 in 2019). As was the case in previous years, most of these are waste related inspections, accounting for 71% of the total inspections carried out. Of note is that waste inspections levels were maintained and inspections under water and air legislation declined. The number of prosecutions initiated in 2020 also fell with 409 prosecutions initiated in 2020, along with an additional 920 litter prosecutions being initiated.

This report outlines the positive work that local authorities carried out in 2020 focussing on National Enforcement Priorities. Waste enforcement activities largely remained resilient in 2020 with many good examples of multi-agency work and the improved coordination and strengthening of enforcement through the WERLA shared services. The reduced enforcement activities in Water and Air/Noise needs to be addressed considering the decline in water quality and the significant health impacts associated with air/noise.

The report highlights areas where further action is required including:

- Water and Air/Noise enforcement are insufficiently resourced. The provision of more resources including shared services is required to increase capacity of local authorities in these areas.
- Local authorities must:
 - Implement better targeting of water enforcement activities in 'at-risk' areas and follow up on non-compliances they are detecting especially those relating to agriculture and septic tanks.
 - Continue to improve the quality of waste data and effectively share this data to target enforcement effort.
 - Engage in co-ordinated and targeted inspections of solid fuel supplies particularly at the point of entry of the specified fuels onto the market. This should be supported by sample analysis and follow-up enforcement action.

1. Introduction

From 2014 to 2018 the environmental enforcement performance of local authorities was measured using the EPA's Local Authority Performance Framework. This is being updated and the new framework will be used to assess local authority plans and reports submitted from 2021 onwards. This activity report serves as an interim report during the transition to the updated performance framework. This report serves to give account of the environmental enforcement activities of the 31 local authorities in 2020 and highlight areas for improvements. To this end, the report:

- documents the environmental enforcement activities of 31 local authorities in 2020;
- outlines trends in these enforcement activities;
- focuses on activities in national enforcement priorities; and
- highlights actions for improvement.

The national picture of environmental enforcement amongst local authorities in 2020 is presented in Section 2 as a summary of inspection and enforcement activities. In Section 3 there is a focus on the thematic areas of Air, Waste and Water and their related national enforcement priorities. All data on the environmental activities presented within this report are rounded for ease of comparisons year on year and to present the amalgamated activities of all local authorities in a clear and concise format. Appendix 1 provides further detail on enforcement activity trends.

Development of a new Local Authority performance management framework

The local authority performance framework will evaluate the performance of local authorities in progressing National Enforcement Priorities (NEPs) designed to achieve environmental outcomes. This supports a move away from completing a set number of inspections to selecting the appropriate interventions to ensure authorised sites are regulated and unauthorised activities are deterred. The NEPs are collated into four themes, governance, waste, water and air.

There will be an annual assessment of each NEP, 20 in total, for each of the 31 local authorities from 2021 onwards. It will assess local authority RMCEI plans along with implementation reports on activities and results. The new assessment will consider the selection, carrying out and results of inspection and enforcement activities to drive improvements in waste management, water and air quality and noise controls. The results will be collated to report on national progress for the selected 20 National Enforcement Priorities each year.

The Role of Local Authorities in Environmental Enforcement

Local authorities play a significant role in the enforcement of environmental legislation nationally. Staff in local authorities enforce over 500 environmental protection obligations arising from more than 100 pieces of legislation. This includes:

- > **Compliance with Waste Management Legislation** – e.g., permitting of waste facilities, such as recycling depots and soil & stone infill sites; the collection of waste including the segregation of food waste; regulation of unauthorised waste activities, including illegal dumping; and implementation of producer responsibility initiatives.
- > **Compliance with Water Quality Legislation** – e.g., compliance of agricultural activities with the Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) Regulations, licensing and enforcement of effluent discharges from factories and hotels, and inspection of septic tanks.
- > **Compliance with Air Quality and Noise Legislation** – e.g., enforcement of solid fuel regulations, and compliance with fuel standards including sulphur content of coals, and completion of Noise Actions Plans.

2. Overview of Local Authority Environmental Activities for 2020

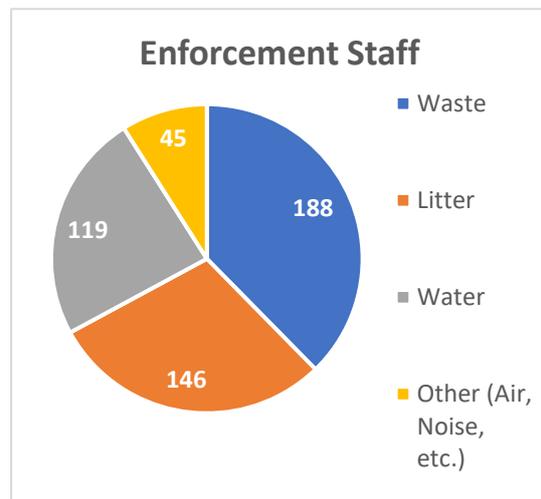
COVID-19 Impact

The COVID-19 global pandemic resulted in the implementation of social and economic restrictions throughout the country early in 2020 to limit the impact of the pandemic. The environmental regulatory work of staff employed by the local authorities was classified as essential work during the pandemic. In March and April of 2020, the environmental enforcement and inspection activities of many local authorities understandably came to an abrupt halt. However, some local authorities made good use of this time to review their working practices and implemented innovative ways to resume their environmental regulatory functions for the remainder of the year. This was particularly evident in the Waste sector with the introduction of remote auditing, compliance checks and remote engagement to resolve complaints. Some local authorities also reported a move to remote auditing and engagement with solid fuel merchants and retailers to monitor compliance with Solid Fuel Regulations. The EPA recognises the work and commitment of the local authority personnel who continued their essential work throughout this difficult time.

Staff Resources for Environmental Functions

Local authority staff numbers involved in environmental regulation have been recovering since 2015. The total of environment enforcement staff across local authorities at the end of 2020 was just under 500 staff.

Almost two thirds of environment staff work in waste, and this is borne out by the much larger volume of waste inspections and enforcement actions. Staff in the water area account for about one quarter of environment staff. Air quality and noise enforcement have limited resources which reflects the amount of enforcement activity in these sectors.



Local Authority Shared Services

Certain environmental roles have 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.

The role of the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities (WERLAs) is to coordinate waste enforcement actions within regions, to set priorities and common objectives, focus resources on national priorities and to ensure consistent enforcement across the three waste management planning regions.

In relation to water, air and noise enforcement, there is not an equivalent co-ordinating enforcement shared service. More co-ordination of inspection and enforcement activities is required. While there is ongoing consideration of implementing and/or enhancing approaches in other environmental enforcement areas including air and noise - progress is slow.

Environmental Authorisations in Place

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 slightly from 2019 to 2020 with a total of just over 15,000 authorisations granted, or in place. While some permits regimes decreased slightly, there was an increase in burning of waste applications¹ (by 800).

Environmental Inspections Undertaken

Overall, the total number of inspections completed by local authorities decreased by 4% from 188,000 in 2019 to 180,600 in 2020. Waste and Litter inspections account for just over 71% of the total number of inspections completed.

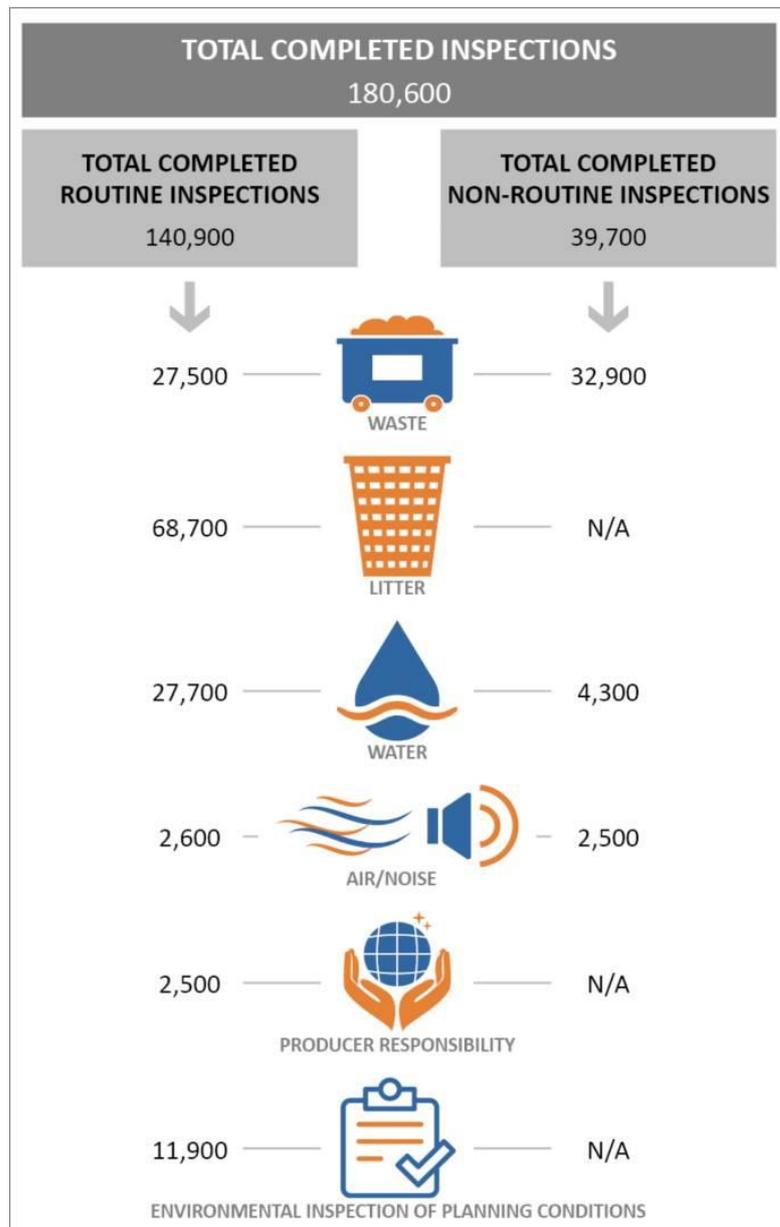


Figure 1: Total Environmental Inspections Completed in 2020

¹ Waste Management (Prohibition of Waste Disposal by Burning) Regulations 2009

Environmental Complaints Received

Local authorities managed over 85,000 environmental complaints in 2020, reflecting a 10% increase on the previous year. Over 90% of environmental complaints received by local authorities relate to litter and waste combined as detailed in Figure 2 below. A county-by-county breakdown is provided on the map in Figure 3.

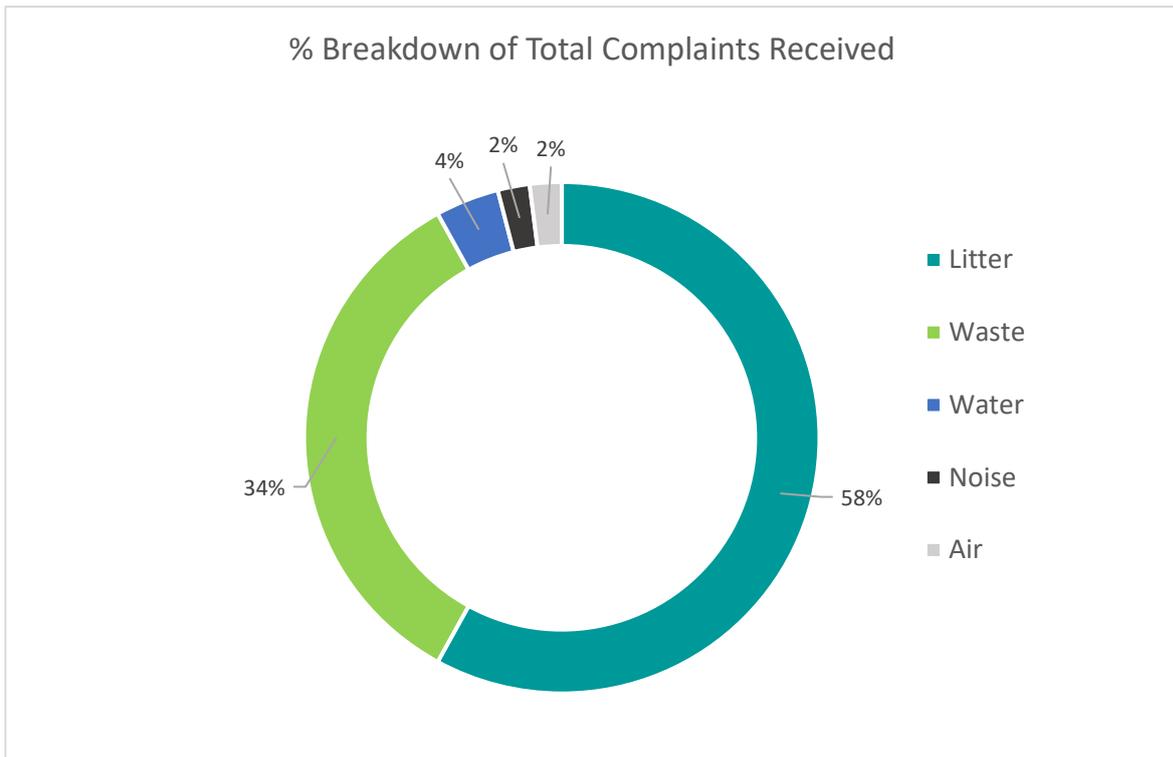


Figure 2: Breakdown of the complaints received in 2020.

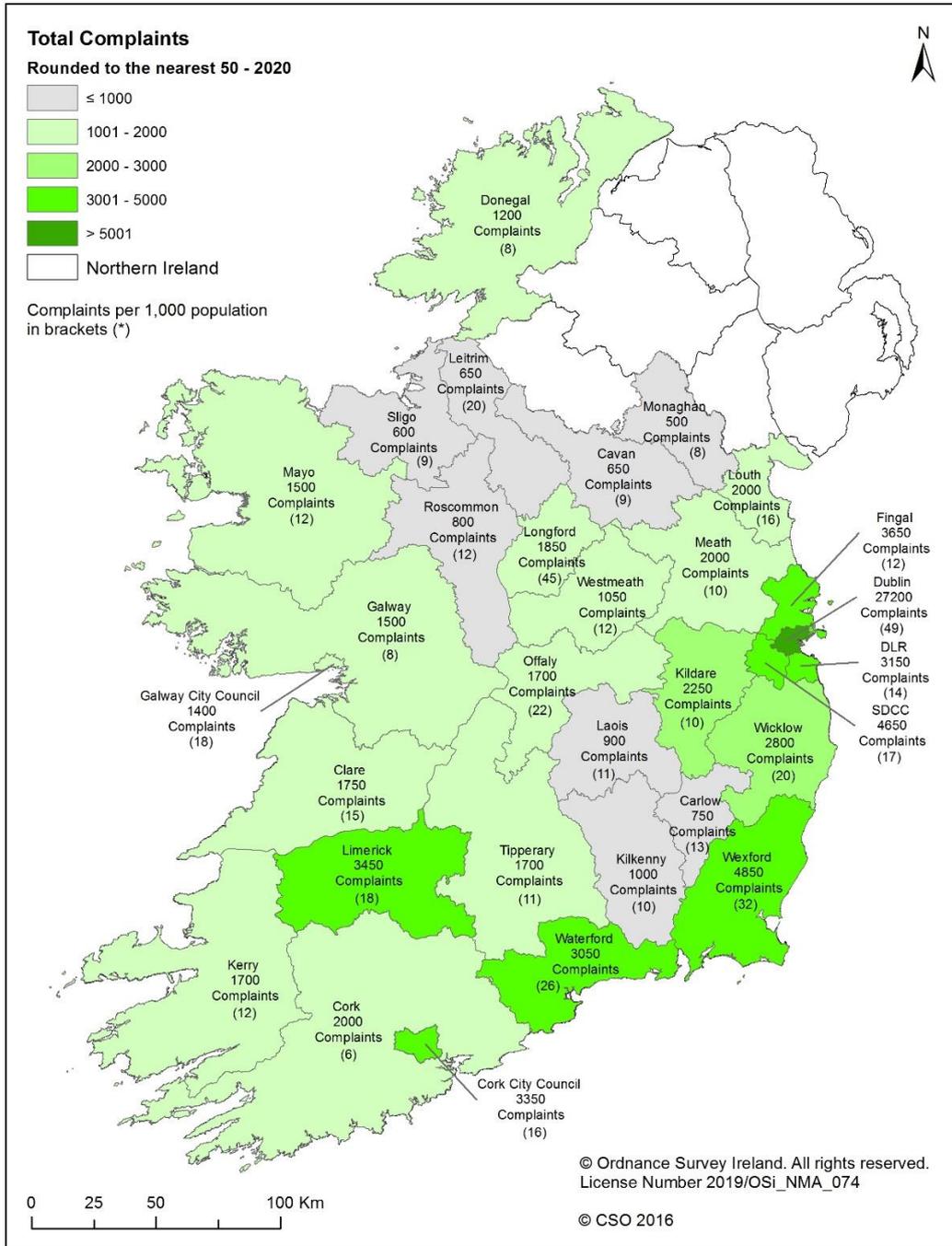


Figure 3: Total Complaints Received by Local Authorities in 2020

Environmental Enforcement Actions Taken

The total environmental enforcement actions initiated decreased by over 15% to 19,360 in 2020 (from 22,860 in 2019). Enforcement notices consist of a range of actions including:

- Non-statutory warning letters
- Cross-reporting to other enforcement agencies
- Fixed payment notices
- Statutory/legal notices
- Directions to carry out actions



Environmental Prosecutions Undertaken

In 2020, 409 legal actions were initiated compared to 517 actions in 2019. Prosecutions initiated reduced across all thematic areas in 2020. Waste prosecutions showed a 20% decrease. There was also a similar decrease in the number of litter prosecutions initiated (920 litter prosecutions initiated compared to 1,200 in 2019). There were 24 water prosecutions initiated in 2020, with only 2 air prosecutions initiated.



This decrease in prosecutions initiated is attributed to COVID-19 restrictions. It is considered that restrictions on site inspections, and more significantly a reduction in court capacity during 2020 resulted in this decrease. Given the lead time taken to initiate and reach a conclusion on prosecutions – some impact on overall prosecution numbers may continue beyond 2020.

Actions Required:

It is clear that significant resources are directed towards waste enforcement – this is reflected in the staff numbers assigned, activities carried out and progress seen.

However, the EPA considers that Water and Air/Noise enforcement are insufficiently resourced. The provision of resources including shared services is required to increase capacity of local authorities in these areas.

3. PERFORMANCE AND THEMATIC AREAS

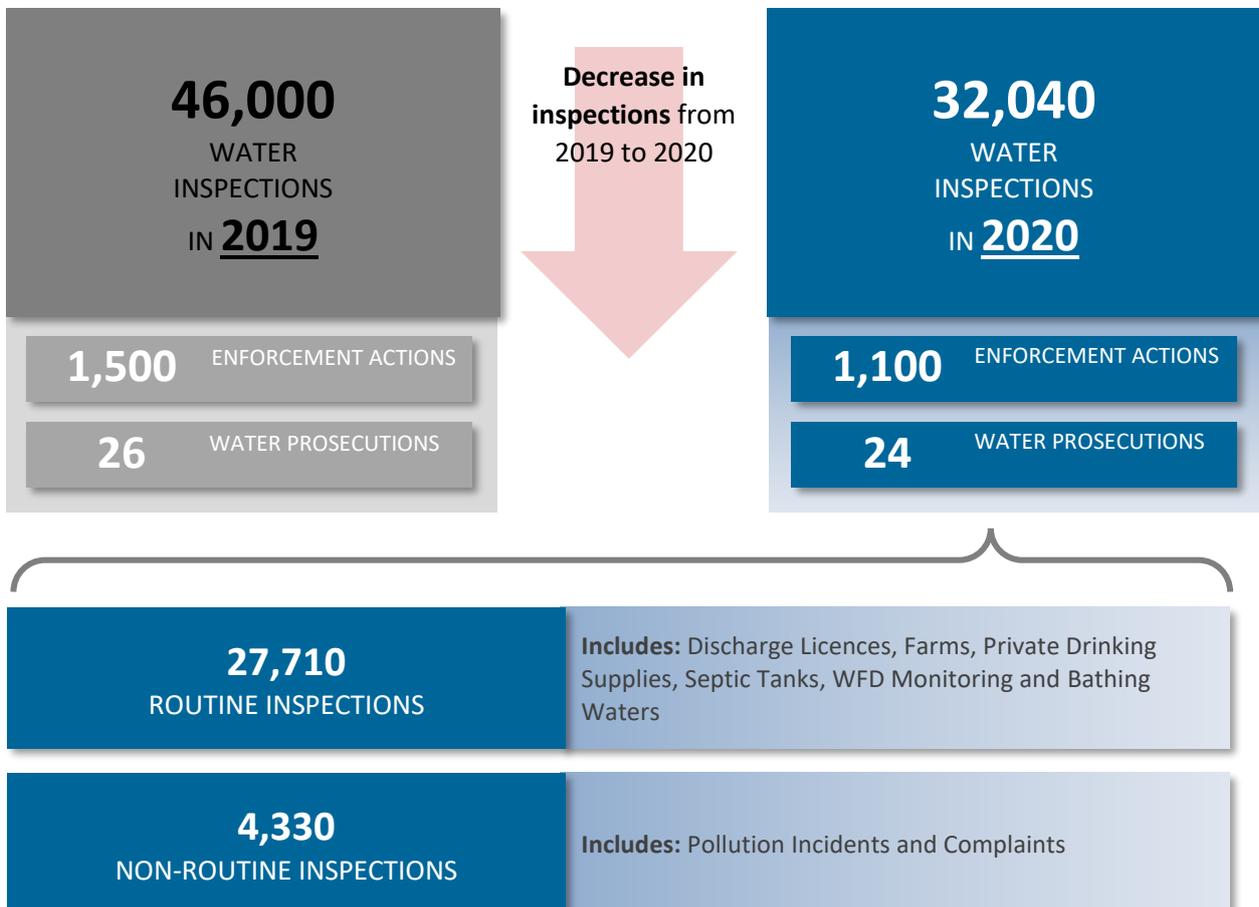
WATER - Focusing on National Enforcement Priorities (NEPs)

Overview of Activities Undertaken

Ambient water quality continues to decline nationally, with serious declines in pristine rivers continuing. Water monitoring is used to target inspection and enforcement actions where protection or restoration improvements are needed and as such water monitoring was assigned as a national enforcement priority for 2020.

The national water enforcement priorities for 2020 also included agriculture, septic tanks, and discharges from small industrial point sources. The local authorities also enforce some drinking water supplies which are the responsibility of regulated private water suppliers, as these are important for human health. Diffuse pollution and agricultural activities have significant impacts in many water catchments. Statutory water quality monitoring accounted for a large proportion of local authority water related inspections activities for 2020 and these targets were generally achieved.

Inspections and enforcement activity of the national water enforcement priorities are key to protect water bodies from excess nutrients. However routine inspections of these priorities reduced in 2020 from the low base completed in 2019. It is also clear that there is often inconsistent selection/prioritisation of sites for inspections (e.g. lack of clear identification and prioritisation of discharge licenses/farm activities causing waterbody pressure) across local authorities. Where non-compliance is detected evidence of follow up and enforcement action is often lacking or unreported. Enforcement actions/prosecution numbers in this area have also decreased. Summary details of water enforcement activities are outlined below, and mapped in Figures 4-5.



Specific Activities Undertaken-National Enforcement Priorities

The overall objective of National Water Enforcement Priorities in 2020 is to maintain and improve water quality in all water bodies to meet the Water Framework Directive targets. The following section summarises the activities relating to these identified national enforcement priorities in 2020.

NEP1 WATER MONITORING

The EPA and local authorities collaborate in relation to the national monitoring programme for water quality under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) with the local authority undertaking the sampling activities and the EPA providing analysis of the samples taken. The information from this monitoring programme is critical to the assessment of our water environment. It helps focus resources to investigate and address water quality issues. The Local Authority Water Programme (LAWPRO) supports local authorities in their sector's role under the WFD. There has continued to be good collaboration between the shared services and the local authority via the regional committees and directly. The Operational & Surveillance Monitoring Programme in 2020 achieved its sample target.

| | | | |
|---|----------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| <u>2020</u> | 13,500 | 8,350 | 5,150 |
|  | TOTAL SAMPLES | Operational & Surveillance Monitoring | Investigative Monitoring |
| <u>2019</u> | 14,910 | 11,450 | 3,450 |

Comments:

In virtually all cases there was good completion of the planned Operational & Surveillance Monitoring Programme in 2020. Investigative monitoring increased since 2019, however the outcome of these activities was rarely reported upon.

NEP2 FARM INSPECTIONS

Local authorities inspect farms under the Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Waters (GAP) regulations. The Regulation sets out requirements to protect waters from pollution by agricultural activities. The objective of this priority is to ensure that inspections undertaken are risk-based focussing on key issues within catchments. These would focus on water bodies at risk outside 'priority areas for action*', and focus on carrying out the water quality protection role of the local authority. **River Basin Management Plans specify 'priority areas for action' where efforts will be focussed to improve water quality*

| | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <u>2020</u> | 2,730 | 930 | 1,100 | 700 |
|  | TOTAL INSPECTIONS | GAP** Inspections | Other Inspections | Non-Routine Inspections*** |
| <u>2019</u> | 4,450 | 2,460 | 1,420 | 570 |

** Including DAFM inspections on behalf of local authorities ***Non-Routine Inspections after an incident /complaint

Comments:

There was a significant reduction in inspection numbers in 2020. This is partly due to DAFM being unable to carry out inspections on behalf of local authorities. There was little evidence of follow-up enforcement actions, so it is unclear if action was taken to address non-compliances that were detected by local authorities. Positive work was reported by some local authorities including for example:

- Collaboration with stakeholders e.g. Department of Agriculture, Inland Fisheries Ireland and Waterways Ireland
- Proactive engagement with farmers i.e. awareness raising and compliance assistance programmes.
- Site selection using risk-based catchment assessments
- Follow up actions when non-compliances were identified– but this must be more frequent.

These actions while very positive, must be more consistently implemented across the country. As approx. 1000 water bodies are impacted by agricultural pressures this priority needs urgent attention.

NEP3 SEPTIC TANKS

The aim of this priority is to identify non-compliant Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (or septic tanks), and subsequently follow up and resolve the underlying issues. This serves to protect human health and water quality from the risks posed by septic tanks. Local authorities inspect septic tanks, as part of the EPA’s National Inspection Plan for DWWTs. Under this plan the local authorities must annually inspect 1000 septic tanks (minimum) during 2018-2021. In 2020, local authorities completed 809 of the 1,000 inspections required by the National Inspection Plan (NIP), down on normal years reflecting the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. However, the 4,000 inspections provided for in the NIP 2018-2021 remain on track. Other inspections include non-NIP inspections or re-inspections.

| | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| <u>2020</u> | 1,500 + 36 | <i>arising from referrals from LAWPRO</i> |
|  | TOTAL INSPECTIONS | |
| <u>2019</u> | 1,800 | |

Comments:

While a high level of repairs to failing systems was reported to the EPA, there remains a significant issue with follow-up of advisory notices. In these cases, septic tanks need to be remediated by the owner, or enforcement action needs to be taken by the local authorities to ensure the desired environmental outcomes are achieved. Outreach and engagement with the public through information/social media campaigns is also a very important tool to progress compliance and improvements in this NEP. The reported level engagement activity is similar to 2019 – at approx. 900.

NEP4 DISCHARGE LICENCES

Local authorities inspect compliance with water pollution discharge licences. The conditions attached to a discharge licence primarily aim to control the discharge of trade effluent to surface water or groundwater. Licenses set conditions so the discharge is treated and controlled in a manner that protects the receiving environment. The objective in this priority is to ensure that all licences associated with significant pressures are compliant with emission limit values.

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---|---|
| <u>2020</u> | 2,110 | 200 | 130 |
|  | ROUTINE INSPECTIONS | NON-ROUTINE UNAUTHORISED INSPECTIONS | INSPECTIONS FOR WATER POLLUTION LICENSE APPLICATIONS |
| <u>2019</u> | 2,370 | 230 | 110 |

Comments:

There are currently just over 1,200 discharge licenses in place and there is a good level of risk-based monitoring completed. There are some good examples of progressing this NEP through:

- follow-up enforcement activities when non-compliances were noted,
- good engagement with licensees and,
- innovative working practices in relation to counteracting COVID-19 restrictions.

Nevertheless, local authorities must ensure they are focusing on the appropriate sites and ensure all discharges subject to Section 4 are licenced.

NEP5 PRIVATE WATER SUPPLIES

Under the Drinking Water Regulations local authorities have the legal responsibility to regulate private supplies of potable water. Local authorities are responsible for ensuring private water supplies meet the requirements of the drinking water regulations through monitoring, investigation and enforcement activities where required.

| | | |
|---|-------------|------------|
|  | <u>2020</u> | 930 |
| | <u>2019</u> | 620 |

inspections OF PRIVATE WATER SUPPLIES

Comments:

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, local authorities reported a significant increase in the number of inspections of private water supplies undertaken in 2020. This is positive, however more action is needed to ensure regulated private supplies are appropriately registered.

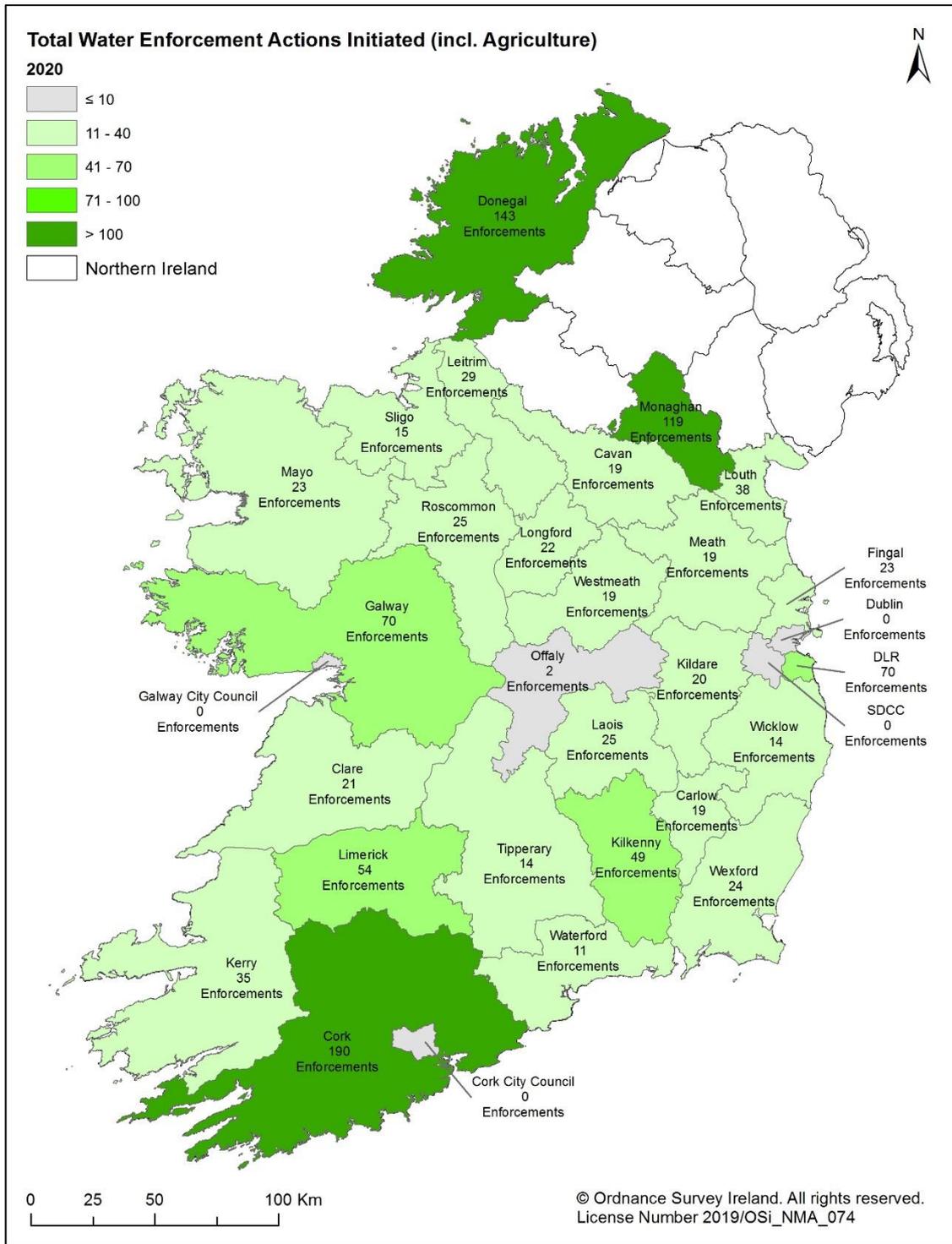


Figure 5: Total Water Enforcement Actions Initiated by Local Authorities in 2020

Water National Enforcement Priorities - Actions Required:

Water quality in Ireland's rivers, lakes and estuaries is declining nationally and must be better protected through evidence-based measures, integrated water catchment-based work and reducing the amount of nutrients ending up in water courses².

In this regard:

- Local authorities must target their water enforcement activities better in waterbodies at risk of not meeting Water Framework Directive targets, especially in the agriculture and septic tank areas.
- Local authorities must follow up on non-compliances detected and take appropriate enforcement action.
- Better co-ordination between local authorities is also needed if progress is to be made to protect and restore water quality. This targeted approach should be clearly defined in local authority RMCEI plans for 2022 and resources assigned appropriately.

² Ireland's Environment An Integrated Assessment 2020-EPA

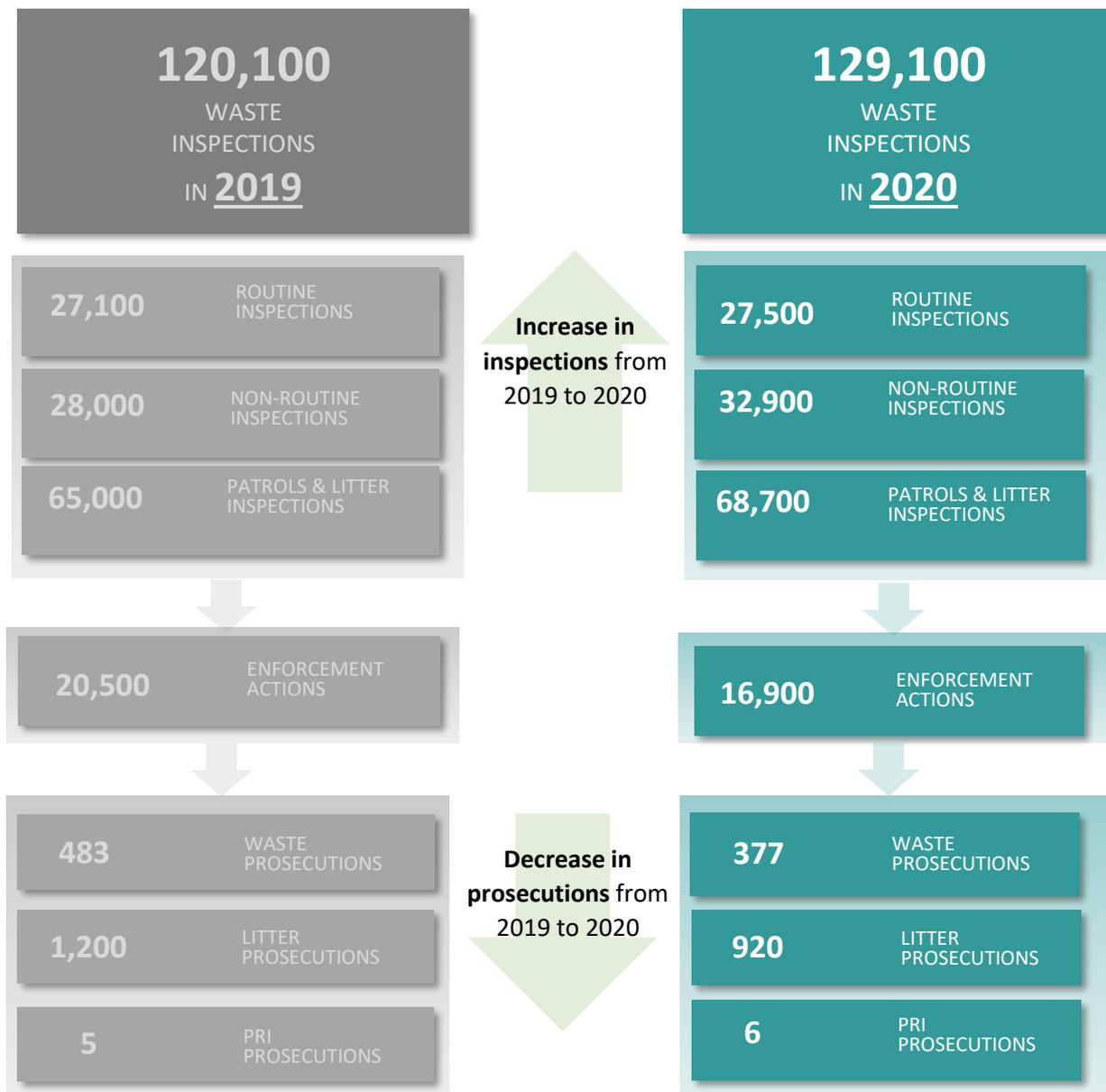
WASTE - Focusing on National Enforcement Priorities (NEPs)

Overview of Activities Undertaken

Local authorities play a vital role in the enforcement of waste legislation in this country. As a group, they are the single largest waste regulator in the country, and therefore, effective enforcement by local authorities can have a significant impact on the management of waste in Ireland.

As detailed in Section 2, there was a significant increase in complaint numbers received by local authorities from the public in 2020 (mainly waste/litter related) and there was an increase in related waste inspection activities. Some limited areas of routine waste inspections were reduced by COVID restrictions e.g. household and commercial waste. While waste enforcement actions and prosecutions were also reduced generally, it is of note that the waste enforcement (and waste collections) system was largely resilient in the face of COVID impacts. For example, while waste prosecutions declined there remained a significant national waste enforcement effort in 2020.

Summary details of waste enforcement activities are outlined below and mapped in Figures 6-8. Each NEP area is also discussed in the boxes below.



Specific Activities Undertaken-National Enforcement Priorities

National Waste Enforcement Priorities in 2020 centred around better collection, segregation, treatment and management of waste. The aim is to increase recycling rates to meet EU targets and to adhere to the principles of the circular economy.

This is achieved by prioritising activities to detect and cease illegal waste activities. There is also focus on driving compliance with legislation for key waste streams including Construction & Demolition, End of Life Vehicles and Household and Commercial waste. Producers also play a role where they ensure that their products are disposed of correctly via producer responsibility schemes.

The following section summarises the activities relating to the identified national enforcement priorities in 2020. It is worth noting that multiple NEPs (e.g. illegal waste activity and ELVs) include good examples of multi-agency work - with collaboration between local authorities and An Garda Síochána, Regional Waste Management Offices, WERLAs, Customs, Department of Social Protection, Housing Departments, and NTFSO. Likewise, the requirement for good quality waste data runs across all waste NEPs, to direct resources more efficiently and target enforcement efforts more effectively.

NEP1 MULTI-AGENCY SITES OF INTEREST / TACKLING SIGNIFICANT ILLEGAL WASTE ACTIVITY

In tackling illegal waste activities, the detection and cessation of unauthorised collection and dumping activities, and remediation of polluted sites are the main objectives. 2020 saw a significant increase in complaint numbers received by local authorities from the public. The majority of these were waste and litter related. Inspection numbers relevant to this work area increased in 2020.

Enforcement activities remained strong, despite decreasing from 2019 levels. Good collaboration was seen in 2020 with over 170 multi-agency inspections carried out, targeting illegal waste activity, with many resulting in waste removal, fines and prosecutions.

| | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------------|--|
| <u>2020</u> | 24,850 | 54,170 | 5,450 |
|  | INVESTIGATIVE INSPECTIONS RELATING TO ILLEGAL DUMPING | LITTER PATROLS & INVESTIGATIONS | LITTER POLLUTION MONITORING SURVEYS |
| <u>2019</u> | 21,100 | 48,870 | 5,150 |

At the end of 2020, there were 3,150 Open Investigations relating to Illegal Dumping. 1,300 of these (>40%) were >6 months old at the end of the year. A slight increase on closing figure in 2019.

Comments:

Complaints from the public show an increase in COVID related littering (i.e. medical PPE/masks, beverage containers from outdoor consumption) which has been addressed through increased inspections and oversight by local authorities.

In larger cases of illegal waste activity many local authorities have reported good progress including:

- Effective investigations including covert monitoring, aerial surveys and multi-agency cooperation
- Engaging Community Policing Unit of An Garda Síochána to assist in surveillance
- Enforcement actions including successful prosecutions, fines and custodial sentences
- Positive outcomes were being reported e.g. closure/remediation of unauthorised sites.

NEP2 CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION WASTE

The appropriate management of this high tonnage waste stream will remain of critical importance. The objective in this NEP is to have authorised management, movement and disposal of C&D waste. This will include checking movements of C&D waste, management of C&D waste arising at construction sites and acceptance of waste after it leaves the site. Just under 8 million tonnes* of Construction & Demolition (C&D) wastes were generated in Ireland in 2020, a significant reduction of approximately 1 million tonnes from 2019. This reduction likely relates to Covid 19 restrictions in the industry. Despite this, activity levels were increased on 2019 and the high compliance level seen will be useful as a benchmark into the future.

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| 2020 | 1,490 | 1,040 | LAs conducted 700 first-time inspections of C&D sites. 580 were compliant = 83% |
|  | INSPECTIONS RELATING TO SEGREGATION, RECOVERY & DISPOSAL | INVESTIGATIVE INSPECTIONS OF C&D SITES WITH NO PERMITS | |
| 2019 | 970 | 880 | |

Comments:

Good examples of enforcement activity reported by local authorities in 2020 included:

- Effective targeting of sites and close oversight of significant C&D generating sites
- Enforcement actions and follow-up on site remediation/waste removal and the regularisation of un-permitted sites
- “Cradle to Grave” inspection of C&D waste movements, and
- Proactive engagement on construction sites to raise awareness of appropriate waste management practices

*NWCPD data

NEP3 END OF LIFE VEHICLES (ELVs)

The objective here is that all relevant ELV facilities are authorised and maintain good compliance for acceptance, classification, segregation, recycling and disposal of ELVs. This includes ensuring accurate waste classification and quantification of waste data in AERs, that hazardous components and WEEE are adequately segregated and that facilities accept waste from authorised collectors/sources only. Substantial progress was made on this NEP in 2020 – however the compliance rate for first-time inspection suggests further improvement is possible. A number of local authorities did not report identifiable progress in this NEP area.

| | | | |
|-------------|---|-------------|--|
| 2019 |  | 2020 | 170 First-Time Inspections of Authorised ELV Facilities under the ELV Regulations 2014. 90 were found to be compliant. Compliance Rate = 55% |
| 260 | ELV FACILITY INSPECTIONS | 260 | |
| 300 | UNAUTHORISED ELV SITE INSPECTIONS | 340 | |

Comments:

In 2020, local authorities reported good progress including:

- Multi-agency co-operation to tackle unauthorised ELV sites resulting in the removal of ELVs to authorised facilities
- Full site clearance and remediation of sites – with removal of over 350 ELVs, almost 1,000 Tyres and further surveillance and court action in one local authority
- Good targeting and selection of sites in some cases using annual waste data returns to target and facilitate proactive early interventions

Follow up actions including enforcement activity and environmental outcomes were also reported.

NEP4 HOUSEHOLD & COMMERCIAL WASTES

In focusing on household and commercial waste, the objective is to maximise segregation, and recycling of municipal waste. The use of 3-bin systems, accurate waste classification and quantification of waste data in AERs and ensuring high level of compliance amongst households are critical. Significant resources are dedicated to routine enforcement in this area to maintain compliance levels across the sector, though Covid-19 restrictions impacted on enforcement activity levels in 2020. Nevertheless, high activity levels are seen in the details below – despite inspections of households and commercial premises being particularly impacted by COVID restrictions. Increased use of waste data analysis to identify areas of concern should be continued.

Over 450 Non-Routine Inspections relating to unauthorised Waste Collectors took place in 2020. A further **400 inspections** were carried out on unauthorised waste activities.

| <u>2020</u> | 8,780 | 1,140 | 2,660 | 730 |
|---|-------------------------|--|--|--|
|  | HOUSEHOLD WASTE SURVEYS | INSPECTIONS OF HOUSEHOLD & COMMERCIAL KERBSIDE WASTE | INSPECTIONS OF WASTE COLLECTION PERMIT HOLDERS | INSPECTIONS OF FOOD WASTE PRODUCERS <i>(Hotels, Restaurants, Nursing Homes, etc.)</i> |
| <u>2019</u> | 8,490 | 1,420 | 1,900 | 1,480 |

In 2020, LAs carried out over 3,700 Non-Routine Household Waste Inspections arising from complaints. This is an increase from 2,700 inspections in 2019.

Comments:

Good compliance rates were noted in inspections targeted at supermarkets, garages, and takeaways, with some local authorities reporting increased waste segregation following enforcement and stakeholder engagement. Innovative approaches to the administration of fines using web-based tools were also reported by one local authority in 2020. Approximately half of local authorities issued FPNs in relation to Waste Collection Permit operators suggesting further investigation of these operators is warranted in 2021.

NEP5 LOCAL/PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY INITIATIVES

PRIs* allow product producers to develop schemes where the products they produce are disposed of responsibly. The objective of this priority is to ensure operators subject to these PRIs are registered appropriately. This requires a consistent approach to enforcement by all local authorities and effective follow up of suspected PRI waste producers. Good regulatory compliance at all waste facilities including local authority sites is also included under this NEP. Inspection activity in relation to PRIs was reduced in 2020 with local authorities reporting this being due to Covid-19 restrictions, though routine regulatory activity in this area is expected to increase in the coming years. As recycling rates have levelled off for packaging, achieving the more ambitious EU targets will make this a key area for focus in the future.

*PRIs include WEEE, Batteries, Packaging, Tyres and Farm Plastics.

| <u>2019</u> |  | <u>2020</u> | |
|---|---|-------------|---|
| 600 | WEEE INSPECTIONS | 510 | Under the Packaging regulations, the local authorities inspected 300 suspected major producers in 2020 while a further 290 inspections were carried out on registered self-compliers. |
| 610 | TYRE RETAILER INSPECTIONS | 500 | |
| 710 | BATTERY INSPECTIONS | 490 | In 2020, local authorities carried out 130 inspections of suspected vehicle importers for registration requirements. |
| In 2020, there were 230 inspections of the plastic bag levy regulations, while a further 100 inspections were conducted in relation to farm plastics. | | | |

Comments:

More consistent enforcement of PRI regulations has resulted in an increase in registrations across the country.

Good examples reported under this NEP include:

- collaboration with WERLAs to identify suspected producers
- remote waste producer inspections (due to COVID)
- focusing on existing and new businesses – and bringing them into compliance
- focusing on tyre retailers around Halloween period with collaboration with internal multi-disciplinary teams (e.g. waste enforcement, waste management and public domain staff)
- successful prosecutions

Certain routine waste inspections were reduced by COVID restrictions e.g. household waste presentation and commercial premises. However, illegal dumping and littering inspections increased. While waste enforcement actions and prosecutions were also reduced, the waste enforcement (and waste collection) system was largely resilient in the face of COVID impacts. For example, while waste prosecutions declined, there remained a significant national waste enforcement effort in 2020, with only a handful of counties reporting no prosecutions initiated in 2020. Details of waste inspection/enforcement activities are mapped in Figures 7-9

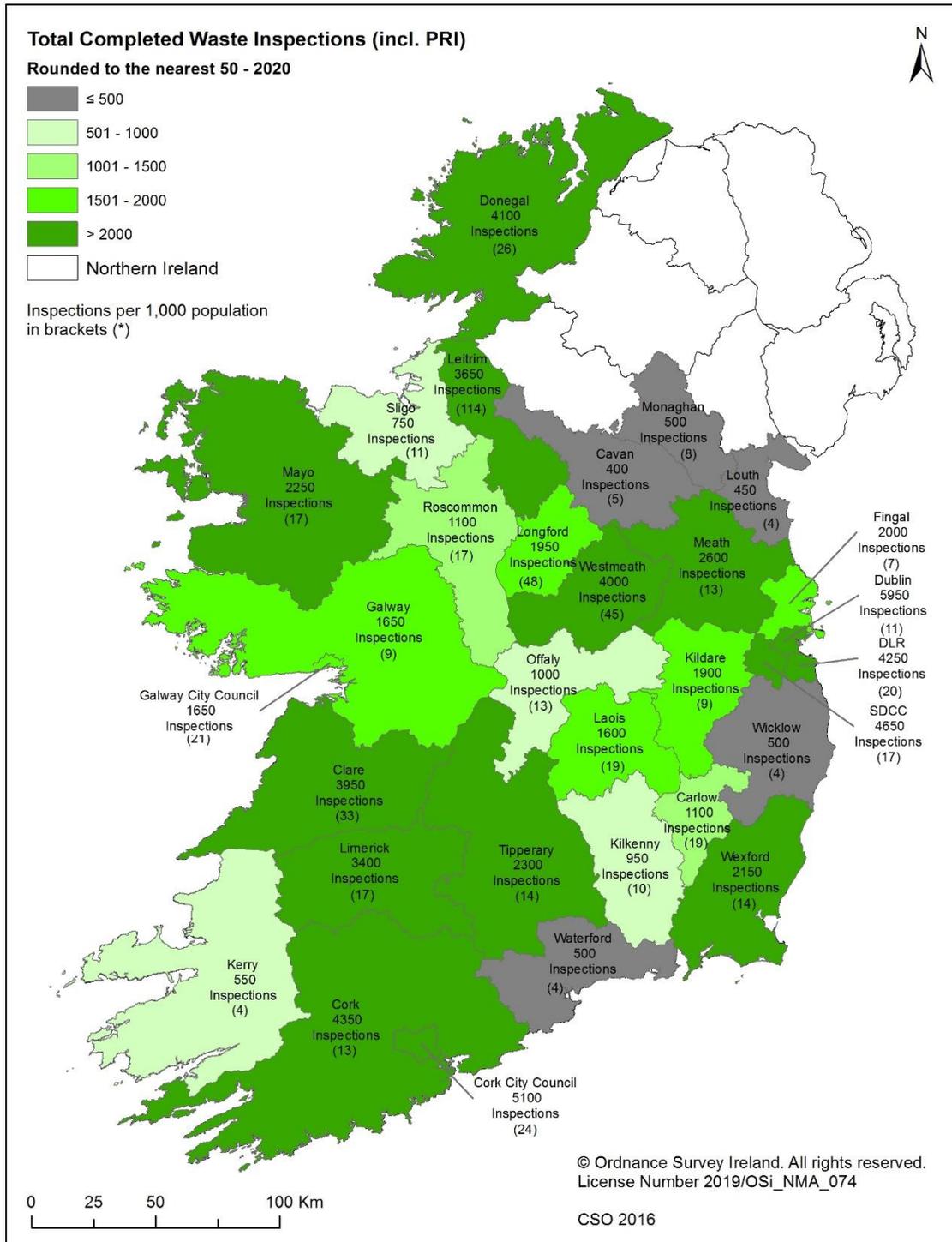


Figure 6: Total Waste Inspections Carried Out by Local Authorities in 2020 (not incl. 68,000+ litter inspections)

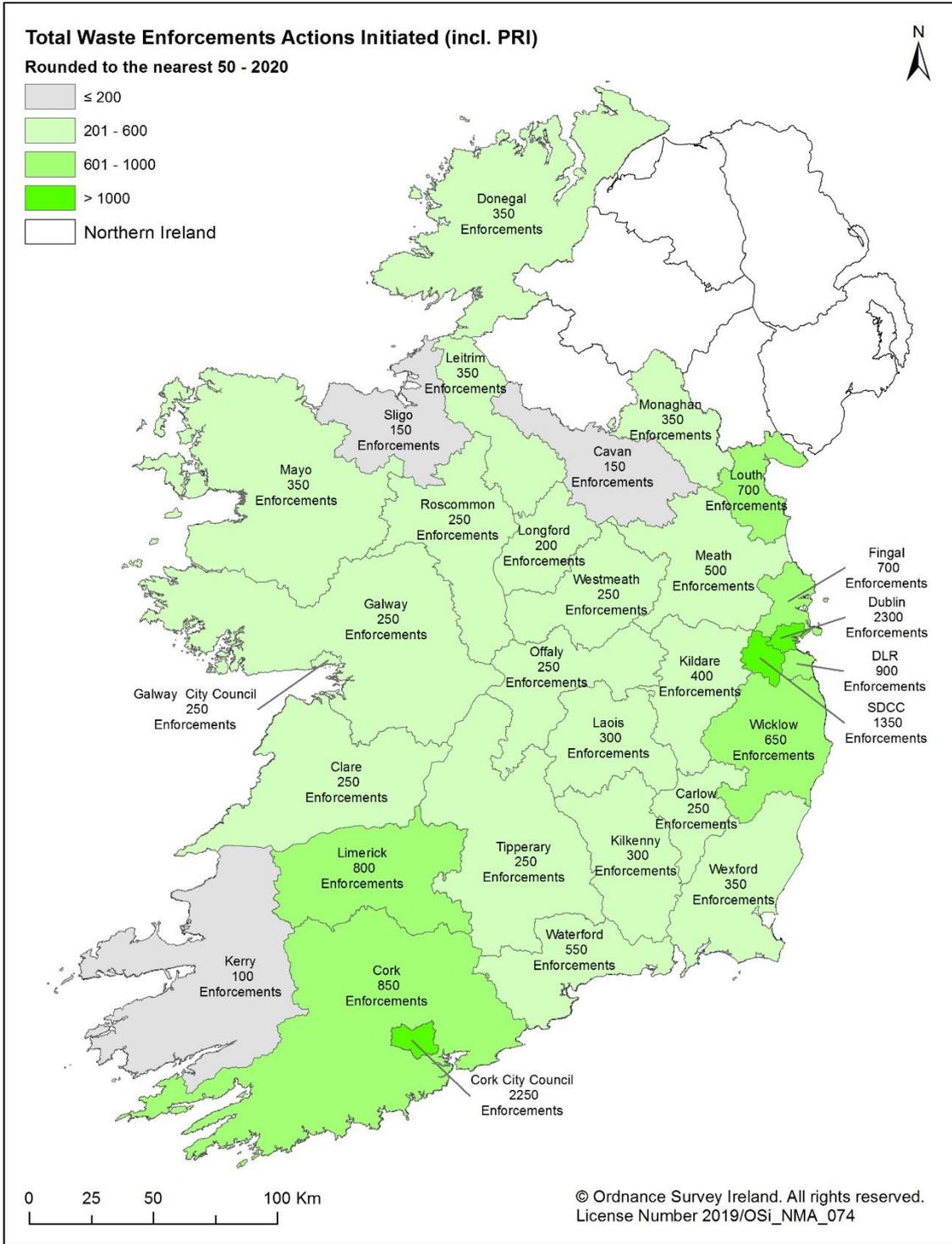


Figure 7: Total Waste Enforcement Actions Carried Out by Local Authorities in 2020

Waste National Enforcement Priorities - Actions Required:

To deliver a circular economy as outlined in national waste policy³, local authority enforcement work is central. The waste enforcement system largely remained resilient in the face of COVID impacts. EPA considers that this is due to the commitment of local authorities, and the co-ordination and strength brought by the WERLA shared services.

In this regard:

- The EPA considers the need for good quality waste data, and effective sharing of this data is vital. This will allow resources to be directed more efficiently and effectively to target enforcement challenges, particularly illegal waste activities. This should continue to be an overarching goal within waste enforcement in Ireland.
- Local authorities must continue to focus on improving waste management, segregation and recycling to meet national targets by maintaining a high level of compliance with waste legislation.
- 2020 saw many good examples of multi-agency work - with collaboration between local authorities and An Garda Síochána, Regional Waste Management Offices, WERLAs, Customs, Department of Social Protection, Housing Departments and NTFSO. This is welcome and should continue.

³ A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy | Ireland's National Waste Policy 2020-2025

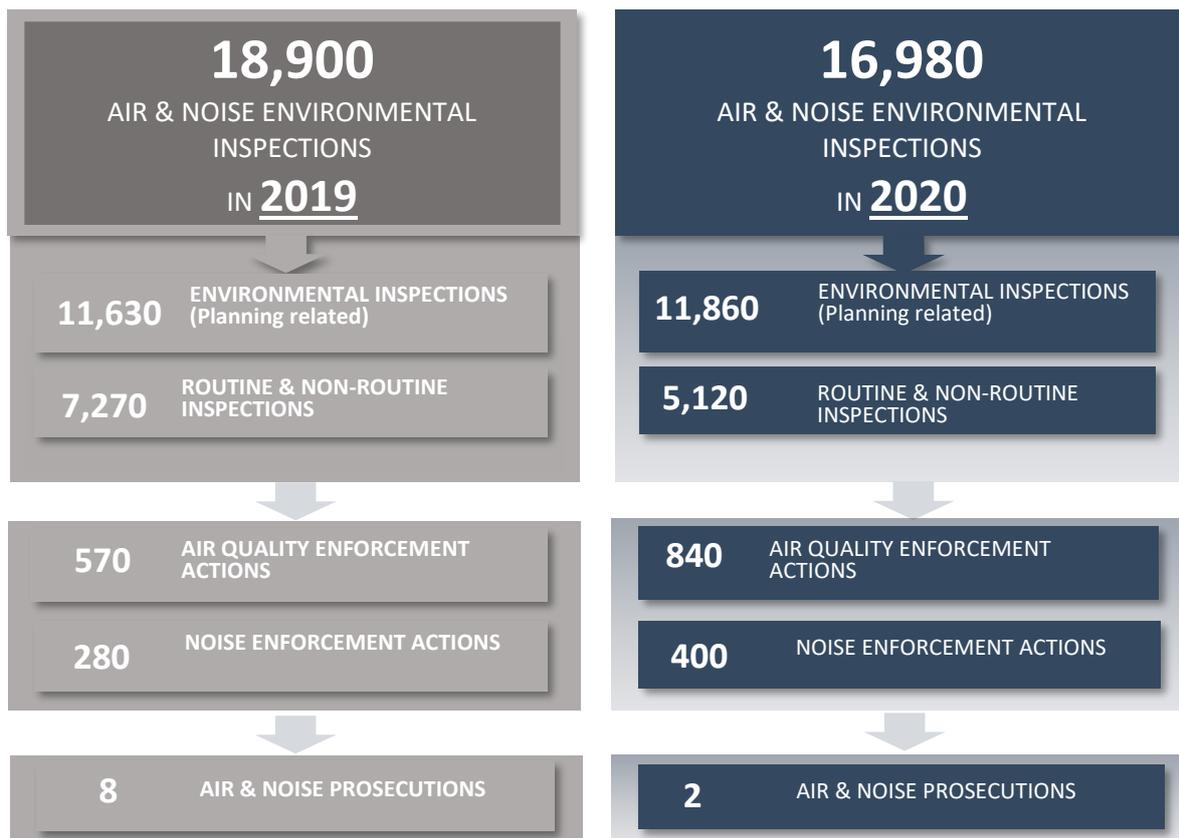
AIR & NOISE - Focusing on National Enforcement Priorities (NEPs)

Overview of Activities Undertaken

Air and noise emissions have a significant environmental and health impact. Local authority enforcement work is key to many of the controls in this area. A national air strategy and associated regulations remain under consideration and are likely to have an impact on air enforcement requirements in the future.

Air and noise complaints increased significantly in 2020 with almost 600 additional complaints received compared with 2019 (approx. 17% increase). Local authorities reported that with the commencement of COVID-19 restrictions there was a noticeable change in the nature and geographical spread of air and noise complaints received. The continuing operation of industrial and construction sites during the early phase of restrictions were often the subject of air and noise complaints, particularly with increased home working and/or home schooling. In general, air and noise enforcement within the local authorities reported the least adaptation and innovation in their response to COVID-19 restrictions.

Summary details of air and noise enforcement activities are outlined below and mapped in Figures 9-10. Each NEP area is also discussed in the boxes below.



Specific Activities Undertaken-National Environmental Priorities

The National Air/Noise Enforcement Priorities in 2020 focus on solid fuel use, air quality monitoring, solvent/paints and better noise control. The following section summarises the activities relating to these identified national enforcement priorities in 2020.

NEP1 PLANNING ASSESSMENTS

Local authority air & noise teams often carry out assessments of planning applications/permissions, and in certain cases suggest conditions on planning applications in relation to air and noise control. Local authority air & noise teams often carry out assessments of planning applications/permissions, and in certain cases suggest conditions on planning applications in relation to air and noise control. The objective is that environmental impacts from air and noise emissions are assessed, and appropriate controls are put in place. This can include preplanning assessments, suggestion/assistance with appropriate planning conditions, consideration air and noise related issues in relevant County and City Development Plans, and assessment of reports required under planning conditions (e.g. noise or air monitoring).

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| 2020 | 660 | 10,290 | 150 |
|  | INSPECTIONS OF PLANNING PERMISSIONS | INSPECTIONS PRIOR TO APPROVAL/ REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION | QUARRY INSPECTIONS FOR AIR & NOISE QUALITY |
| 2019 | 1,440 | 9,710 | 200 |

Planning Inspections, relating to issues other than outlined above, accounted for **750** of the **11,860** inspections conducted in 2020.

Comments:

While environmental assessments of planning permission applications increased slightly in 2020 (this is primarily a desk-based activity), on-site inspections of planning permissions and quarry related inspections decreased. In 2020 many local authorities reported progress through providing appropriate emissions controls for planning permissions through collaborative work with the planning section. Local authorities should continue to focus on these assessments, detailing progress made and identify the outcomes this work achieves.

NEP2 SOLID FUEL

The objective of this priority is to ensure only compliant fuel products are available for purchase by the end-user – and relates to the ban on the distribution and use of bituminous coal. Low Smoke Zones expanded to cover a number of large towns nationwide in 2020.

Local authorities monitor the number and profile of solid-fuel merchants operating in each local authority area including an analysis of fuel merchants using social media platforms to market solid fuels. The public are also engaged through local authority driven awareness programmes to promote compliance and awareness. Inspections are mainly directed at solid fuel merchants, and retailers. The enforcement effort reduces particulates and other pollutants in the air and reduces adverse impacts on health and the environment.



There have been **115 solid fuel engagement and education campaigns** implemented in 2020 to increase public knowledge of air quality pollution by the burning of solid fuels.

Comments:
 Solid fuel activity in 2020 was affected by COVID -19 restrictions, with reduced inspection activity. This is on top of a generally declining level of engagement and enforcement in this area since 2015. Nonetheless, a high compliance rate was achieved where inspection of fuel merchants and retailers was undertaken. Good examples of progress with this NEP in 2020 included social media campaigns, educational videos, targeted household visits and ‘mystery shopper’ exercises at fuel merchants and retailers. In 2022, local authorities should aim to target retailers and fuel merchants not yet inspected, while also conducting fuel sampling where appropriate.

NEP3 NOISE PLANS

Noise Action Plan must be prepared by Local Authorities* relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise. The objective of this priority, and these Action Plans is to reduce the share of people chronically disturbed by transport noise as well as preserve good environmental noise conditions.



For the 2020 reporting year, **15 Local Authorities** have submitted their **‘Noise Action Plan-Progress Reports’** to the EPA

Comments:
 Following from the 5-year Noise Action Plans (2019-23), all local authorities are required to submit an annual ‘Noise Action Plan - Progress Report’ to the EPA. For the 2020 reporting year, 15 Local Authorities have submitted their ‘Progress Reports’ to the EPA. This ‘Progress Report’ is required to demonstrate progress on the key issues and priority areas for action, and the fact that many local authorities had not submitted this is not satisfactory.

* As required by Statutory Instrument 140 of 2006, known as the Environmental Noise Regulations. These Regulations give effect to the EU Directive 2002/49/EC

NEP4 AMBIENT MONITORING

Poor air quality can impact on human health and is regarded by the WHO as the single biggest environmental health risk. The objective of this priority is two-fold: to deliver enhanced real-time information relating to air quality and forecasting, and to encourage greater understanding and involvement of the public in air quality issues. The EPA operates a network of nationwide air monitoring stations under the National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme to this end, and local authorities assist in this programme.



Comments:

Expansion of the Ambient Air Monitoring Program (AAMP) continued in 2020 with a total of 8 new monitoring stations added and some existing monitoring stations receiving upgrades. In 2020 many Local Authorities reported progress in assisting this expansion and site selection activity for new monitoring stations. Ongoing contact with the EPA team coordinating this work will ensure basic maintenance and calibration of such stations is carried out. Good examples of work by local authorities included developing public engagement programmes and awareness campaigns using the air monitoring station information. The regional sign-up to the WHO 'Breathe Life' campaign will further increase awareness and use of such air monitoring data.

As part of the programme, 24 local authorities carried out 840 inspections in 2020, this is a decrease from 1,430 in 2019. Further expansion of the AAMP is planned in 2022, and local authority involvement will be key in assisting this expansion.

NEP5 LOCAL / DECO PAINTS & ORGANIC SOLVENTS

Under this priority, Inspections are directed at motor factors, vehicle refinishers, paints suppliers and dry cleaners*. These are solvent and deco paint users. Fuel filling stations also have obligations to under regulations**. The objective of this priority is to control air emissions from these operators, thus improving air quality – particularly on a localised basis.



Comments:

There was little information reported to the EPA regarding progress in this area. Local authorities should focus on the outcomes of their inspection activities and apply risk-based criteria to their inspection planning.

* Regulation S.I. No. 565 of 2012 European Union (installations and Activities using organic solvent) obliges operators to hold a certificate of compliance from their Local Authority.

**Petroleum Vapors Regulations (S.I. No. 375 of 1997) - filling stations >100m³ per year are required to obtain a Certificate of Testing from Local Authorities.

Despite the increase in complaints, 2020 saw a significant decrease in the air and noise inspection activities of local authorities compared to 2019. It should be noted that this is coming from a low base of activity e.g. compared to waste enforcement. Many local authorities reported COVID-19 restrictions as a factor in this reduction. Air and noise inspections saw a drop of over 40%. More specifically routine air inspections reduced particularly in the smoky coal and AAMP (ambient air quality monitoring programme) inspections – with COVID-19 again cited as a factor.

Enforcement actions increased mainly due to the activities of specific local authorities, rather than a general overall increase across the country. Dublin City Council and Mayo County Council accounted for most of this increase. Dublin City Council stated that there were fewer site visits carried out in dealing with air and noise complaints during 2020 owing to COVID-19 restrictions, which meant more warning letters were issued. Mayo County Council reported an increase in waste burning complaints possibly due to people being restricted at home and illegally disposing of waste which resulted in increased enforcement actions initiated. Despite increased complaints and the demonstrated health impacts in this area, only one council (Wexford) reported taking air prosecutions. No noise prosecutions were initiated. Details of air and noise inspection/enforcement activities are mapped below in Figures 9-10.

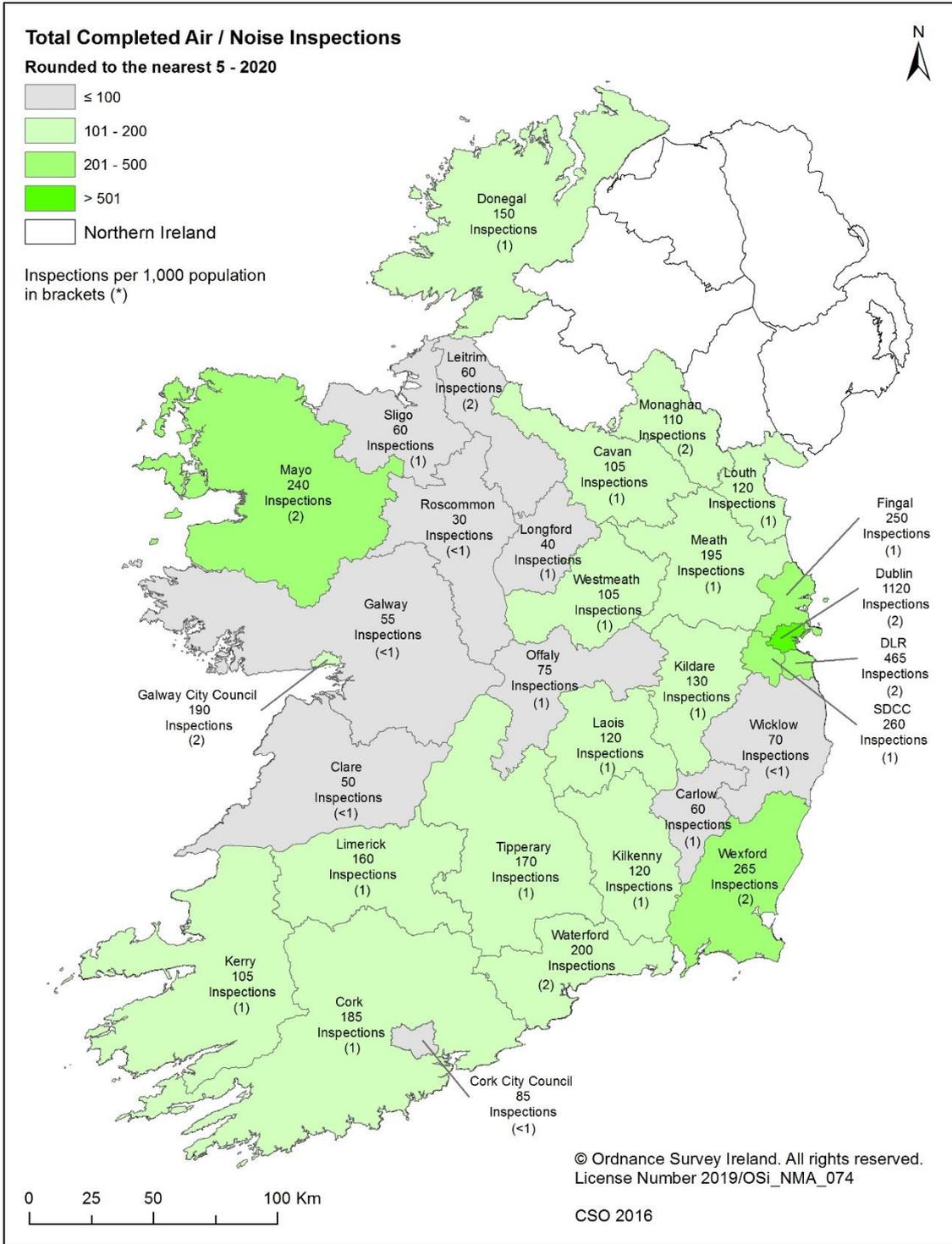


Figure 9: Total Air & Noise Inspections Carried Out by in 2020

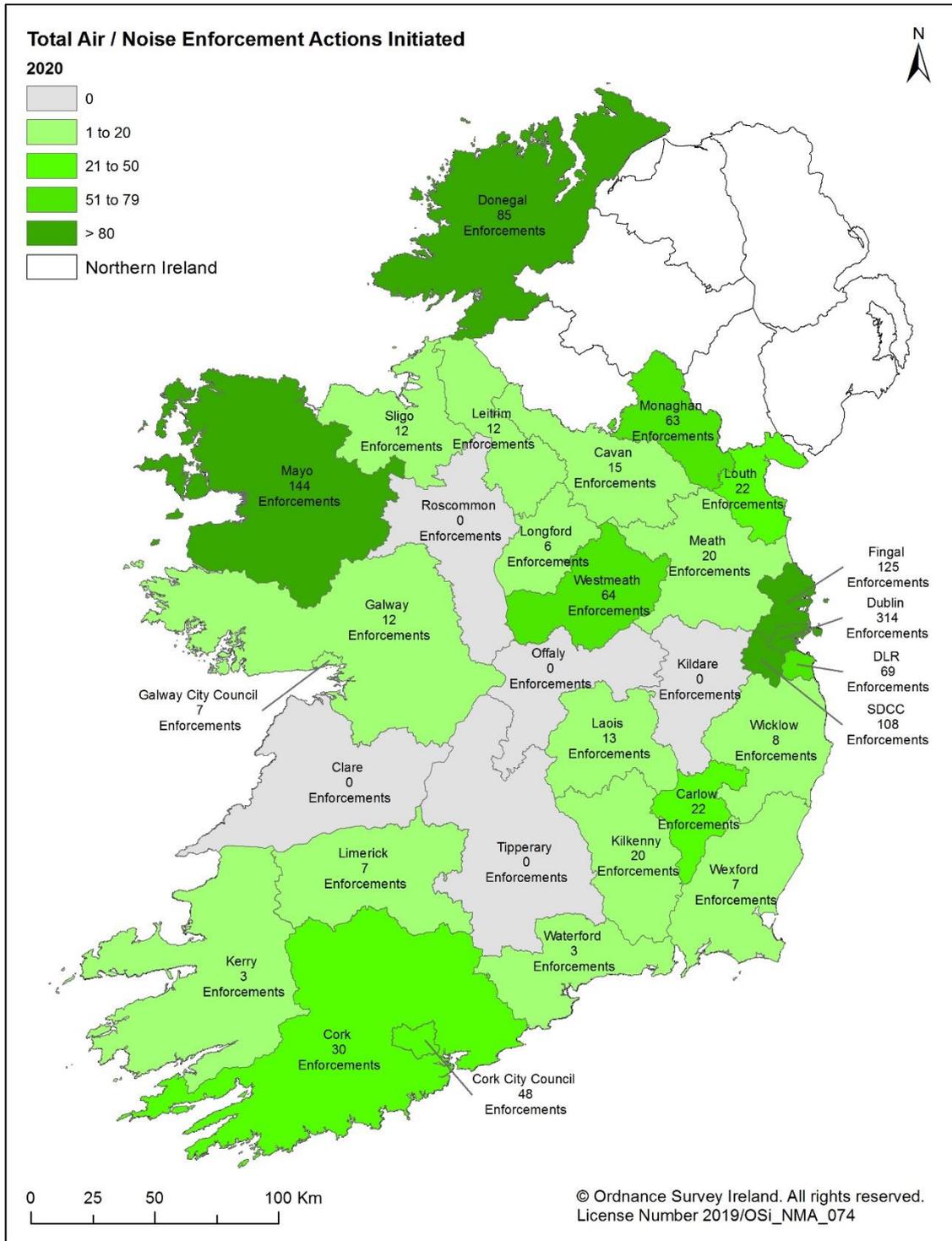


Figure 10: Total Air & Noise Enforcement Actions Initiated by Local Authorities in 2020

Air & Noise National Enforcement Priorities - Actions Required

The proportion of resources dedicated to air and noise enforcement on a national basis is small compared to water and waste enforcement. Nevertheless, this area has a significant environmental and health impact. To deliver improved air quality and noise reductions, local authority enforcement work is key. In this regard:

- Local authorities should engage in co-ordinated and targeted inspections of solid fuel supplies particularly at the point of entry of the specified fuels onto the market. This should be supported by sample analysis and follow-up enforcement action, where needed.
- Local authorities should build on the good work being done on assessing planning applications/permissions and continue to assist with appropriate environmental controls in relation to air and noise planning conditions.

APPENDIX I – 2020 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES

| | |
|--|---|
| Waste | Tackling Significant Illegal Waste Activity |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal dumping; |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unauthorised operators, including skip hire companies and man in the van activities and identification of unauthorised waste collectors advertising on-line |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bye-laws requiring householders to demonstrate how their waste is being managed |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anti-dumping initiative |
| | Multi-Agency Sites of Interest |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of Sites which may contain waste that has been deposited without authorisation requiring multi-agency responses, and notification to WERLAs. |
| | Construction & Demolition Activity |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management and movement and disposal of C&D waste |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring appropriate management and controls are in place at source including Construction sites. |
| | Waste Collection - Commercial & Household Food Waste |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance with waste collection permits |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance by the commercial sector with the segregation requirements |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued roll-out of the Brown Bin |
| | End of Life Vehicles |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a targeted programme of inspections of Authorised End of Life Vehicles sites / operators | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinated actions against unauthorised End of Life Vehicles sites/ End of Life Vehicles operators | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inspections to ensure compliance by waste facility operators with the enhanced traceability requirements | |
| Tracking of Waste Flows | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the quality of data and the mechanisms required to ensure that data can be shared by all relevant agencies in a timely manner; | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • detect and reduce misclassification of waste. | |
| Producer Responsibility Initiatives (PRI) Compliance | |
| | |
| Water | WFD monitoring, bathing water monitoring, and investigative monitoring. |
| | Water Quality Complaints and Incidents |
| | Farm Inspections - risk based on catchment science |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These should be either in inputting Water Bodies upstream of priority areas for action, or in Water Bodies at risk outside priority areas for action. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspections in relation to water quality protection function under the Water Framework Directive |
| | Monitoring and Enforcement of Private Water Supplies (this excludes individual home supplies and public group schemes) |
| | Monitoring & Enforcement of Section 4 Licences |
| | Inspection of Septic Tanks |
| Resource for Engagement, Knowledge Exchange within Priority Areas for Action, Referrals-LAWPRO | |
| | |
| Air & Noise | Solid Fuels: Compliance of fuel merchants, retailers and householders |
| | Continuing extension of Ambient Air Monitoring Programme (extension of AAMP) |
| | Air and Noise Control (complaints) |
| | Air and Noise Control (Planning): assessment & conditioning of planning permissions |

Appendix II – OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY TRENDS

Overview of work volume carried out in environmental enforcement by local authorities 2018-2020.

| Summary of National Environmental Enforcement and Inspection Data, 2018 - 2020 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Licenses/Permits/Certificates | 14,200 | 14,800 | 15,000 |
| Inspections undertaken | 168,000 | 188,000 | 180,600 |
| Environmental Complaints Received | 78,000 | 78,000 | 85,600 |
| Enforcement Actions Taken | 20,000 | 22,900 | 18,900 |
| Prosecution Actions Initiated | 520 | 520 | 445 |
| Waste | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| Illegal Dumping Inspections | 12,650 | 21,100 | 24,850 |
| Multi-agency Inspections | 200 | 270 | 170 |
| Household waste surveys | 3,090 | 8,490 | 8,780 |
| Commercial Food Waste Inspections | 1,300 | 1,480 | 730 |
| C&D Handling Inspections | 750 | 970 | 1,490 |
| Litter Patrols | 51,840 | 48,870 | 54,170 |
| Waste Collection Permit Inspections | 1,660 | 1,900 | 2,660 |
| % Completion of Waste Collection Permit Data Verification | 57% | 60% | 81% |
| Producer Responsibility Initiatives | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| WEEE Inspections | 580 | 600 | 510 |
| Battery Inspections | 690 | 710 | 490 |
| Tyre PRI Inspections | 950 | 610 | 500 |
| ELV Inspections | 300 | 260 | 260 |
| Water | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| WFD Monitoring and investigations? | 12,100 | 14,910 | 13,500 |
| Water pollution incidents/complaints investigations | 4,470 | 4,150 | 3,300 |
| Farm Inspections | 3,700 | 4,450 | 2,730 |
| Inspections of Septic Tanks | 1,250 | 1,800 | 1,500 |
| Discharge Licences (S4) Inspections | 2,450 | 2,370 | 2,110 |
| Air | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| Solid Fuel Regulation Inspections | 900 | 1,050 | 790 |
| Decorative Paint Regulation Inspections | 450 | 460 | 320 |
| Petroleum Vapour Regulation Inspections | 340 | 500 | 300 |
| Solvent Regulation Inspections | 180 | 130 | 110 |
| Enforcement Actions Initiated | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| Waste Enforcement Actions | 16,900 | 20,500 | 16,900 |
| Water/Wastewater Enforcement Actions | 1,400 | 1,500 | 1,100 |
| Air Enforcement Actions | 900 | 570 | 840 |
| Noise Enforcement Actions | 700 | 280 | 400 |
| PRI Enforcement Actions | 30 | 10 | 120 |
| Total Enforcement Actions Initiated | 19,930 | 22,860 | 19,360 |
| Prosecution Actions Initiated | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| Waste Prosecution Actions | 460 | 483 | 383 |
| Water/Wastewater Prosecution Actions | 50 | 26 | 24 |
| Air Prosecution Actions | 9 | 6 | 2 |
| Noise Prosecution Actions | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Total Prosecutions Initiated | 521 | 517 | 409 |

AN GHNÍOMHAIREACTH UM CHAOMHNÚ COMHSHAOIL

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

Is féidir obair na Gníomhaireachta a roinnt ina trí phríomhréimse:

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

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

Abhcóideacht: *Ag obair le daoine eile ar son timpeallachta glaine, táirgiúla 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 scálamór;
- Sceitheadh fuíolluisce uirbigh;
- Úsáid shrianta agus scaoileadh rialaithe Orgánach Géinmhodhnaithe;
- Foinsí radaíochta ianúcháin;
- Astaíochtaí gás ceaptha teasa ó thionscal agus ón eitlíocht tríScéim an AE um Thrádáil Astaíochtaí.

Forfheidhmiú Náisiúnta i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaoil

- Iniúchadh agus cigireacht ar shaoráidí a bhfuil ceadúnas acu ónGCC;
- Cur i bhfeidhm an dea-chleachtais a stiúradh i ngníomhaíochtaí agus i saoráidí rialáilte;
- Maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar fhreagrachtaí an údaráis áitiúil ascosaint an chomhshaoil;
- Caighdeán an uisce óil phoiblí a rialáil agus údaruithe umsceitheadh fuíolluisce uirbigh a fhorfheidhmiú
- Caighdeán an uisce óil phoiblí agus phríobháidigh a mheasúnú agustuiriscíú air;
- Comhordú a dhéanamh ar líonra d'eagraíochtaí seirbhíse poiblí chuntacú le gníomhú i gcoinne coireachta comhshaoil;
- An dlí a chur orthu siúd a bhriseann dlí an chomhshaoil agus adhéanann dochar don chomhshaol.

Bainistíocht Dramhaíola agus Ceimiceáin sa Chomhshaol

- Rialacháin dramhaíola a chur i bhfeidhm agus a fhorfheidhmiú lenan-áirítear saincheisteanna forfheidhmithe náisiúnta;
- Staitisticí dramhaíola náisiúnta a ullmhú agus a fhoilsiú chomhmaith leis an bPlean Náisiúnta um Bainistíocht Dramhaíola Guaisí;
- An Clár Náisiúnta um Chosc Dramhaíola a fhorbairt agus a chur i bhfeidhm;
- Reachtaíocht ar rialú ceimiceáin 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 leibhéal 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 arGhníomhú 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 Timpeallacht 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 gníomhaíochtaí 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 leibhéal 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 tairmí 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 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 hionpraíocht 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.

Comhpháirtíocht 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 agustagann siad le chéile go rialta le plé a dhéanamh ar ábhair imní agusle comhairle a chur ar an mBord.