

Local Authority Enforcement Audit Report

PURPOSE OF AUDIT

This audit was carried out in accordance with **Section 63(2)** of the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Acts 1992 & 2003** and aims to assess the performance by the local authority of its statutory functions in relation to environmental protection. This report contains advice and recommendations for the local authority in accordance with **Section 63(3)(a) of the EPA Acts 1992 & 2003**. The audit process is a sample of the performance of a local authority in carrying out its statutory functions in relation to environmental protection.

Audit Detail	
Date of Audit	13 th May 2026
Local Authority	Mayo County Council (MCC)
Issue Date	19 th June 2026
Audit report Ref:	LAET 2026/06/19
Representing the Local Authority	Killian Farrell – Senior Executive Scientist & RMCEI Co-ordinator Patsy Winters – Executive Scientist – waste enforcement and regulation Paula Prendergast, Head of Environment, Climate Change and Agriculture Kieran Flynn – Assistant Scientist – agriculture Elaine Rowley – Assistant Scientist - agriculture
EPA Inspectors	Helen Boyce – Inspector Michael Martin - Inspector

Summary of Key Findings

Observations were raised in relation to the following:

- Mayo County Council (MCC) failed to achieve the NAIP inspection target in 2025;
- The non-compliance rate for initial GAP inspections is high, while the use of dissuasive sanctions, particularly Cross Reports to DAFM, was comparatively low;
- There has been a significant reduction in routine work completed in the waste area in 2026 due to a 75% reduction in staff for various reasons since the beginning of the year;
- The CRM system for recording complaints received has improved however further enhancement has been recommended.
- When appropriate, the use of dissuasive sanctions and prosecution should be increased to bring about more timely compliance.

Actions in relation to the above are required to be taken, as specified in the audit report.

MCC scored 'Moderate' for 3 of the NEPs under the local authority performance framework for 2025, as follows:

- Pressures from Agriculture (Farmyards);
- Pressures from Agriculture (Farmlands);
- Environmental Noise Directive (ENDS)

This is of concern to the Agency and must be addressed as a matter of priority.

MCC stated that lack of resources has impacted on the performance by the council of its statutory environmental protection functions. MCC should, therefore, continue to review the staff resources in its environmental section and ensure that this vital work is appropriately prioritised and that adequate resources are deployed to deliver its statutory functions in environmental protection.



Environmental Complaints Handling

	Answer
Each local authority is required under the Governance NEP for 2026 to review and update existing complaints handling procedures and processes to ensure alignment with the revised Environmental Complaints Procedure for LAs. Has this work been undertaken to date?	Yes
Observation	
- A new CRM system is in place since November 2024 and is more efficient than the previous system. It uses parent and daughter case numbers to link complaints and inspections. The system was designed in accordance with the required fields in NEMIS so it allows for more efficient data retrieval and reporting. All open complaints from prior to the new system have been logged on it. Retrieval of EPA referred complaints was not easy without knowing the Mayo County Council reference number; it was not possible to search using the EPA reference number. - The complaints procedure was updated to reflect the Environmental Complaints Procedure for Local Authorities issued in September 2025. This procedure was also incorporated into the staff manual for training new staff. - Mayo County Council's website was updated to take account of the recommendations in the 2023 audit report. The complaint form is now more easily accessible (under Report) however photos cannot be uploaded with it. It was recommended that a specific field for Report Environmental Complaints be added under "How can we help you today?" so it is easy to see in the list with Planning and other sections. - It was noted that there were a large number of waste complaints open at the end of 2025 and it was explained that this was due to a significant reduction in staff numbers from four to one due to long-term sick leave and maternity leave and a staff member leaving. It is hoped that the three staff will be in place by early June 2026.	

Table 1: Sample complaints reviewed

	EPA Reference	Subject	Finding	Action
1.	COM21189	Illegal collection and disposal of septic tank waste.	The location of where the waste was dumped has been found (commonage land with 150 owners) but the alleged offender has not yet. Additional focus will be placed on this complaint coming into holiday home season as there may be more collection and disposal of septic waste.	MCC to follow up, using proportionate enforcement action in line with the enforcement policy.
2.	COM015924	ELVs at pier	This complaint relates to ELVs in transit from Clare Island being held at Roonagh Pier until there is a sufficient number for a lorry load to take to an ATF. There is no environmental pollution associated with this complaint.	MCC to confirm that this complaint is closed on the CRM system.
3.	Oldest complaint on MCC system	Build-up of rubbish at a house	This complaint is open since November 2024 and relates to a build-up of rubbish at a house. There were 6 inspections recorded however it was not clear what the outcome of these were and it was noted that it was most likely that there was no response at the door.	MCC to record the outcome of inspections and to either, close out on this complaint if appropriate or take enforcement action to rectify the issue.



WATER National Enforcement Priorities

Pressures from Agriculture

Observation

- **Farm selection methodology:**

Mayo County Council demonstrated their recording systems for farm inspections and public complaints. Their risk-based farm selection process is in line with good practice, utilising available mapping, water quality data and local knowledge.

- **GAP inspections:**

Mayo County Council carried out 65 initial GAP inspections in 2025 (42% of the target of 154). The non-compliance rate in the county for initial inspections is high at 62%. Cross reports to DAFM were low in comparison with only 2 issued. It was noted that 69% of 16 farms inspected on follow up inspections had restored compliance. 9 other Non-GAP inspections were also undertaken in 2025.

- **Resources:**

Mayo County Council stated that resource recruitment and retention had impacted on the performance of its statutory environmental protection functions previously, but for Q1 and Q2 of the 2026 they had the required resource to undertake the NAIP. However, that situation was vulnerable to further staff movement.



Waste National Enforcement Priorities

Tackling illegal waste activities and Multi-Agency Sites/Operators of Concern

Observation

- It was noted that the Waste Convictions Register was up to date (the most recent prosecution was in 2024) and that there were no waste prosecutions recently. Mayo County Council is working to get alleged offenders to comply without the need for legal action where possible however it was noted that prosecution should be considered for long-standing issues and/repeat offenders.
- Monthly multi-agency roadside checkpoints organised by An Garda Síochána are attended as much as possible. Whilst the detection of illegal activity regarding waste may be low on the day, MCC find it useful for networking with relevant organisations and detection in relation to illegal activity.

Construction & Demolition material

Observation

- There are 29 authorised (COR and WFP) soil recovery sites in Co. Mayo and 4 waste facilities accepting C&D waste skips. MCC foresee that the recovery levy may result in operators bypassing the authorised facilities and illegally dumping C&D waste due to the cost and administrative burden associated with the levy.
- Validation is a big body of work which MCC may have difficulty completing in 2026 due to staffing constraints. It was noted at the audit that it was not clear on inspection forms what the outcome of the validation process was.
- The Extractive Industry Waste Register is up to date with approximately 90 entries on it. There are no new quarries, only existing quarries going deeper. As the quarries in Mayo are sand and gravel or limestone, there is little waste associated with these.

Household Waste

Observation

- Due to resource constraints, MCC's focus up to the time of the audit was on complaint follow-up. On average, 3-4 new complaints are received daily. All routine inspections are paused until staff are available.
- A Section 55 notice was issued in 2025 under the Waste Management Act for hoarding of waste at a domestic property. This complaint is active since 2018.

Commercial Waste

Observation

- As above regarding routine inspections.

Plastics and Producer Responsibility Initiatives

Observation

- None.



Recommendations & Actions Required

COMPLAINT HANDLING:

1. Ensure that records are kept up to date on CRM and that the close out of issues/complaints is recorded and easily accessible.
2. Include EPA Referral or the EPA reference number in the title field of EPA referred complaints so that they are easy to retrieve.
3. Consider including a specific field for *Report Environmental Complaints* under “How can we help you today?” on MCC’s website so it is easy to see in the list with Planning and other sections.
4. Investigate if the Complaint webform can be easily amended to allow the upload of photos and maps with the complaint details.

WASTE NEPS:

1. Ensure that all enforcement options are considered, up to and including legal action where required.
2. Awareness raising will be important in the construction sector to ensure building site waste is managed and disposed of appropriately in light of the additional costs associated with the recovery levy and the fact that Mayo has one of the highest number of soil recovery sites nationally.
3. Clearly show on inspection forms what the outcome of the validation process was.
4. Once resources are in place, focus on enforcement and close out of longstanding waste complaints.

PRESSURES FROM AGRICULTURE:

1. Mayo County Council should strive to achieve the NAIP initial inspection target for 2026 and undertake follow-up inspections and apply enforcement actions as may be required.
2. When appropriate, the use of dissuasive sanctions, such as **Cross Reports to DAFM should be increased** as an enforcement instrument for non-compliances found during **initial** and/or **follow-up inspections**.
The aim of this increase is to help bring about:
 - o better compliance,
 - o a broader awareness of likely enforcement action being applied for poor farming practices/management which fail to protect water quality, and
 - o to provide a level of fairness for farmers who utilise good practices/management on their farms.



FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

Mayo County Council is required to address the recommendations and actions outlined in this report and submit a comprehensive response to the EPA by **Wednesday 19th August 2026**. The submission should detail the measures taken, or planned, to implement these recommendations and actions, including associated timeframes where applicable. Please note that these actions may be subject to verification by the EPA during future audits or inspections. This report is issued without prejudice to the right of the EPA to take any further action which it may in future decide is appropriate, whether under Section 63 of the EPA Acts 1992 and 2003 or otherwise.

Report prepared by:

Helen Boyce

Reviewed by:

M. Heneghan