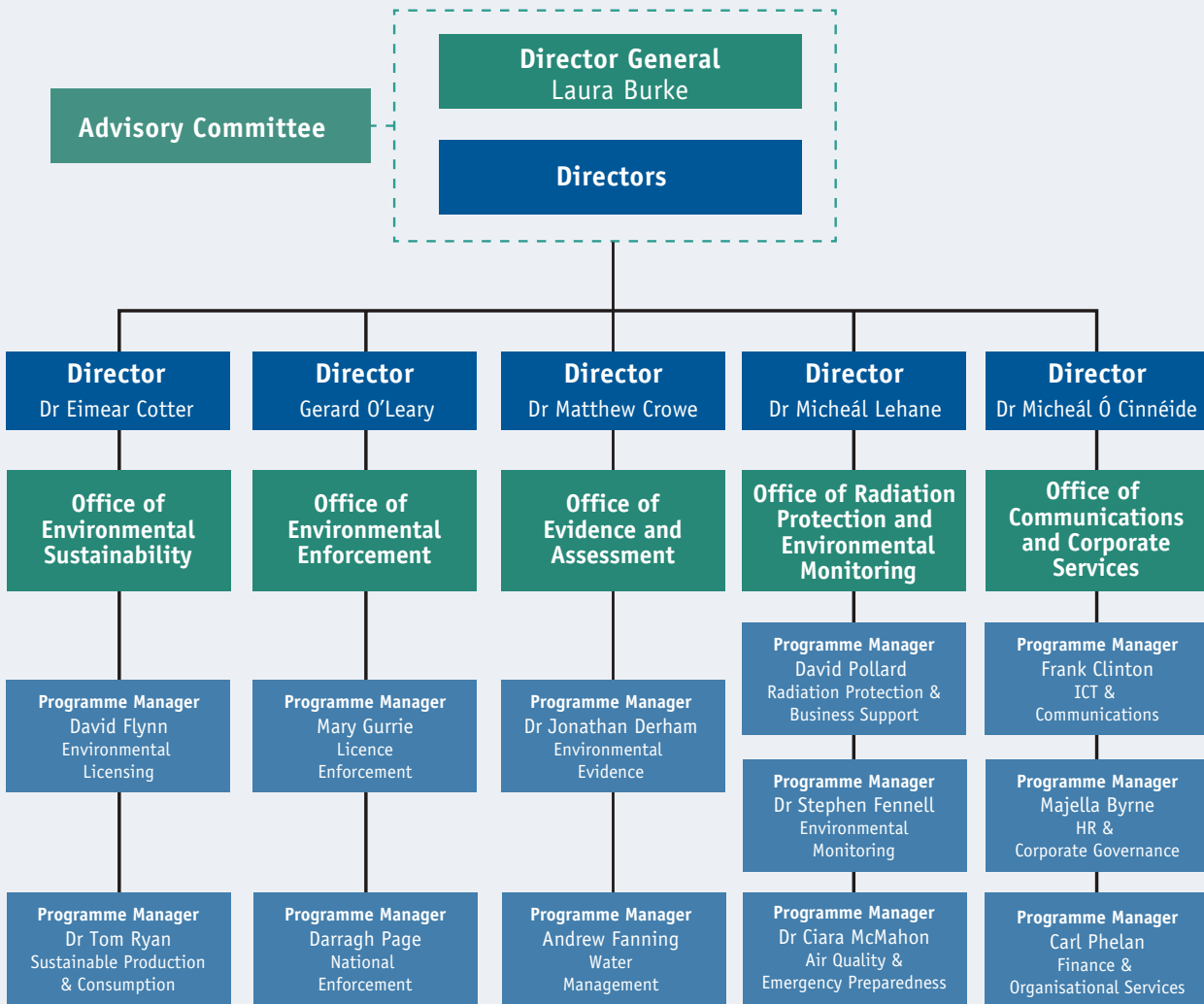




ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
2017 in Review

# Organisational Structure - February 2018



## 2017 in Numbers

### INFORMATION

**29,757**

Twitter followers across 11 EPA accounts

**2,200+**

environmental queries from the public

**908,000**

sessions on [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)

**106**

information requests (56 AIE and 50 FOI)



**2,400+**

farmers disposed of 263 tonnes of hazardous & problem wastes at 10 Farm Hazardous Waste collections

**3,130+**

environmental complaints reported via *See it? Say it?* app

**228**

EPA datasets uploaded to data.gov.ie (11,052 total views)

# Environmental Protection Agency

The Environmental Protection Agency (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. We play key roles in the provision of environmental knowledge, implementation of environmental regulation and advocacy for the environment.



## WHAT WE DO

**Knowledge**  
Provide high quality, targeted and timely environmental data, assessments and evidence to inform decision making by citizens, businesses and Government.

**Regulation**  
Implement effective regulation and environmental compliance systems to deliver good outcomes for people and the environment and target those who don't comply.

**Advocacy**  
Work with others to advocate for a clean, healthy and well protected environment and sustainable environmental behaviour.

## HOW WE DO IT

Monitoring & Assessment

Research & Expertise

Timely & Accessible Information

Licensing

Enforcement

Guidance

Partnering & Networking

Awareness Raising

Promoting Sustainable Behaviour

# Key Statistics

## LICENCES

**108**

environmental licences issued

**76**

technical amendments completed

**284**

radiation licences (231 renewals; 53 new) and 1,056 technical amendments issued

## ENFORCEMENT

**320**

inspections of urban waste water sites

**1,529**

visits to industrial and waste facilities

**29**

prosecutions heard

**57**

drinking water site audits

**9**

drinking water Directions issued to Irish Water

**38**

reports published: Water (13); Climate (11); Sustainability (14)





# 2017 in Review

## Resource Efficiency

The EPA provides leadership by identifying new and innovative practices that contribute to waste prevention and resource efficiency. Several activities, many of which are promoted to homes, businesses and other sectors through the National Waste Prevention Programme, saw significant achievements in 2017.

The EPA's *Stop Food Waste* programme promotes food waste prevention and engages with communities and other relevant stakeholders through initiatives such as the *Stop Food Waste Challenge*. In March, Ireland's *Food Waste Charter* was launched by Minister of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten T.D. and EPA Director General Laura Burke. The Charter is a collective commitment to reduce food waste along the entire supply chain.

The fifth annual series of *Farm Hazardous Waste* collections took place in 2017 at ten one-day nationwide events. The EPA-led campaign reduces environmental risk and improves safety for farm families. Farmers have safely disposed of nearly 1,000 tonnes of hazardous waste in five years. The Farm Hazardous Waste



Scheme won the *Excellence Through Collaboration* category in November at the annual Civil Service Excellence and Innovation awards. Furthermore, the *Smart Farming* initiative – a strategic partnership between EPA, IFA and farmers - resulted in improved environmental protection practices on 1,000 farms by end 2017.

In February, the EPA launched a new competition for secondary school students. The *Story of Your Stuff* competition challenged entrants to illustrate the lifecycle of an everyday object. Students used [irelandsenvironment.ie](http://irelandsenvironment.ie) for research and their entries demonstrated a high level of skill, knowledge and creativity. The winning video, by two Co Sligo students, told the story of a pencil and can be seen on the EPAIreland YouTube channel at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTS2BV94D\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTS2BV94D_c)

## Climate Change



Photo: George Karbus Photography

EPA projections released in April indicated that Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions are expected to increase strongly as economic growth takes hold. Ireland would therefore not meet its 2020 EU greenhouse gas emission reduction targets within the current range of policy measures for sectors including agriculture, transport, residential, commercial, non-energy intensive industry and waste. Emissions are projected to be just 4 - 6 per cent below 2005 levels by 2020; the reduction target commitment is 20 per cent. EPA figures also confirmed an increase in 2016 greenhouse gas emissions by Irish companies participating in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme.

In July, the Government published Ireland's first statutory National Mitigation Plan, a 'whole-of-Government' approach to addressing Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan provides a framework to achieve the deep decarbonisation required

in Ireland in line with the Government's policy objectives: to reduce emissions by 80 per cent (compared to 1990 levels) by mid-century across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors; and to implement an approach to carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land-use sector. The EPA is participating in the National Mitigation Plan High Level Steering Group charged with implementation and oversight of the Plan. It is expected that the Group will also oversee the implementation of the National Adaptation Framework. During 2017, the EPA published several important climate change research reports, including a Summary of the State of Knowledge of Climate Change Impacts for Ireland. Outputs from the EPA research programme provide independent science and evidence to support the implementation of the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework.



### Research

The EPA's Research Programme 2014-2020 is designed to identify pressures, inform policy and develop solutions to environmental challenges through providing strong evidence-based scientific knowledge. In 2017, the EPA committed €11.2 million to fund new research. Examples of awards made include:

- ▲ Water (8), Climate (8), Green Enterprise (3) and Sustainability (16) topics;
- ▲ three PhDs (IRC-EPA Scholarship Scheme);
- ▲ co-funding of two SFI-EPA Investigator Programme projects; two Fulbright-EPA projects; five transnational projects (under Climate & Water Joint Calls).

The EPA also supported Irish environmental researchers in securing over €4 million in funding under the EU's Horizon 2020 research programme, Societal Challenge 5 (*Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials*).

# Strategic Goals for the period 2016-2020

Goals	Objectives	Outcomes What we will have achieved by 2020
<b>Trusted Environmental Regulator</b>	<p><b>Ensure</b> the on-going development of a proportionate and effective regulatory approach.</p> <p><b>Align</b> EPA resources to target interventions and reduce environmental risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ A risk-based, responsive regulatory approach that engages stakeholders and protects the environment and people.</li> <li>▲ Reduced environmental risks at EPA regulated facilities through tailored interventions and by ensuring appropriate financial provisions are in place.</li> <li>▲ Driven the improved delivery and management of water and waste infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<b>Leader in Environmental Evidence &amp; Knowledge</b>	<p><b>Realise</b> the full potential of the EPA's knowledge, skill, expertise and regional presence as key national resources in the protection of the environment and human health.</p> <p><b>Accelerate</b> the provision of timely and tailored information to meet the specific needs of stakeholder groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ More timely evidence-based environmental assessments to inform policy and decision making at national, regional and local levels.</li> <li>▲ Better provision of online, up-to-date and accessible information on the environment to stakeholders.</li> <li>▲ A research programme that addresses knowledge gaps and helps identify solutions to emerging and complex environmental problems.</li> </ul>
<b>Effective Advocate and Partner</b>	<p><b>Strengthen</b> the EPA's capability and capacity to influence, advocate and partner to help achieve a clean, healthy and well protected environment.</p> <p><b>Engage</b> the public in the protection and improvement of the environment.</p> <p><b>Promote</b> a greater awareness of the impact of environment quality on human health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ Targeted opportunities to integrate environmental priorities and sustainability into sectoral, economic and social policies.</li> <li>▲ Developed public participation programmes to increase awareness of environmental issues and support the engagement of the public in environmental protection.</li> <li>▲ Collaborated with health agencies and other bodies to realise the benefits of a good environment for health and wellbeing.</li> </ul>
<b>Responding to Key Environmental Challenges</b>	<p><b>Tackle</b> the challenges to deliver improved water quality in Ireland.</p> <p><b>Engage</b> with other strategic partners to promote the development of a holistic national response to climate change.</p> <p><b>Enhance</b> air and radiation protection in Ireland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ Effective and resilient structures in place to deliver better outcomes for water quality.</li> <li>▲ Established a climate change secretariat in the EPA as a centre of excellence that supports the national transition to a low carbon economy.</li> <li>▲ Strengthened the air quality and radiation protection frameworks to further protect people and the environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Organisationally Excellent</b>	<p><b>Develop</b> our staff and align our organisation to deliver best environmental outcomes.</p> <p><b>Focus</b> on the development and promotion of organisational health, wellbeing and safety at work.</p> <p><b>Promote</b> a culture of leadership, reform and innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ Our functions and resources aligned to be responsive and adaptable to meet emerging challenges.</li> <li>▲ Engaged all staff to foster a supportive workplace environment.</li> <li>▲ Enhanced capacity in the area of organisational change and in the use of ICT to support reform and innovation.</li> </ul>

## Water Infrastructure

As well as auditing, inspecting and monitoring water services in Ireland, the EPA sets priorities for Irish Water to improve the national water infrastructure, and uses its enforcement powers when these priorities are not being implemented satisfactorily. Waste water is one of the principal threats to water quality in Ireland. The 2016 report on *Urban Waste Water Treatment* highlighted the need for investment to address infrastructure deficiencies. Our assessment showed that waste water treatment at 50 of Ireland's 185 large towns and cities failed to comply with relevant standards. In addition, it indicated that sewage from 44 areas enters the environment untreated each day and plans to install treatment at some of these areas have stalled. Furthermore, the report showed that four bathing water areas were deemed unsafe for swimming due to health risks caused by sewage. Test results for drinking water presented in the 2016 *Drinking Water Report* confirmed that most of our water supplies are safe. Nonetheless, further improvements are also required in these systems to improve security of supply and avoid water restrictions. At year end, 77 "at risk" supplies were on the EPA Remedial Action List; most of these (52) had elevated levels of Trihalomethanes and 21 lacked adequate treatment to prevent Cryptosporidium entering the water supply.

## Water Quality

The EPA's national assessment of water quality in Ireland, 2010 – 2015, was the first six-year assessment of the status of our waters under the Water Framework Directive. The assessment showed that Ireland had failed to meet the planned national target of 13 per cent improvement in water status for the six-year period.

Although the report found evidence of a relatively stable national picture, with some water bodies improving and others deteriorating, it concluded that not enough has been done to prevent water quality deterioration. A greater focus on protecting our most pristine water environments is needed.

The EPA launched a new bathing water website, [beaches.ie](http://beaches.ie), and reported in May that the overall quality of Ireland's bathing waters remained very good. During 2016, 130 of 140 identified waters met the strict EU standards that provide a high level of protection for bathers. Three quarters of all bathing waters were classed as excellent, although six coastal beaches failed to meet the minimum standards.



## Local Authority Performance

In December, the EPA published a review of local authority environmental enforcement performance. The review found that 23 out of 31 local authorities improved their environmental performance between 2014 – 2016. To improve health and environmental outcomes, the EPA recommended that local authorities target inspections to improve air quality in towns, increase the recycling of food waste and reduce the illegal dumping of tyres.

## Citizen Science

The EPA advanced several citizen science projects during 2017, in cooperation with strategic partners. EPA citizen science initiatives in the areas of air quality, water quality and sustainable living encourage people to become active participants in co-creating environmental data, particularly within their local communities. In October, the EPA launched the GLOBE international science and education programme for Ireland in conjunction with An Taisce. This two-year pilot programme means that, each year, up to 20 primary and secondary schools will learn about and measure air quality in their local area. More than 29,000 schools in 117 countries have participated in GLOBE in recent decades, creating

research-quality datasets that are available to all. During the year, the EPA also undertook surveys that resulted in radon measurements from more than 1,400 homes and the collection of information from the homeowners about their house types. This data will be used to better understand the movement of radon in homes and will feed into the advice the EPA gives to homeowners to protect themselves from radon. The EPA also supported NUI Galway in the rollout of a pilot air quality project for Transition Year students.



### JANUARY



EPA urges owners to ensure end-of-life vehicles and waste tyres go to legitimate waste treatment facilities

EPA launches The Story of Your Stuff competition for secondary schools



### FEBRUARY

### MARCH



EPA hosts its second Forum on Food Waste. Charter on Food Waste launched



Law Society includes radon gas in conveyancing documents



EPA Projections: Ireland will not meet 2020 EU greenhouse gas emission reduction targets



European Commission

Horizon 2020 European Union funding for Research & Innovation

Irish Climate Action researchers secure €12.9m in EU funding

EPA launches its 2017 Research Calls

### APRIL

### MAY



EPA guides on resource exchange and reuse



EPA research on pollution Systems



New mobile app providing bathing water quality information





# Clean Air



Poor air quality is a major public health issue. Approximately 1,500 premature deaths in Ireland in 2014 were directly attributable to air pollution. As it becomes clearer that there is no safe level of air pollutants, the EPA has pressed for action to tackle the biggest threat to good air quality in Ireland, particularly in wintertime – emissions from solid fuels. Emissions from vehicle exhausts also pose risks to people’s health and need to be addressed. The EPA’s most recent air quality report found that, although Ireland did not exceed any legal EU limit values for ambient air quality, the levels of particulate matter is of growing concern. Monitoring results for 2016 showed that air quality in some locations failed to meet the World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline values for a range of pollutants. The EPA again called for movement towards the adoption of WHO’s stricter guidelines, especially for particulates and ozone, as legal and enforceable standards across Europe and in Ireland.

A new national ambient air quality monitoring programme (2017-2022) will significantly increase the availability of localised real-time air quality information. This will enable the public to make informed decisions and better inform national and regional policymakers.

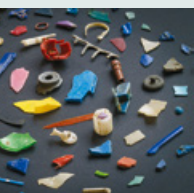
# Accessible Information



Much of the work the EPA does is aimed at engaging the public in protecting and improving our environment. Providing information in a timely and accessible format enables people to keep up-to-date with trends and developments in environmental matters. A new EPA web resource went live in 2017 and will serve as the primary source of waste statistics in Ireland. The [National Waste Statistics](#) web resource provides users with accessible content and easy to use interactive graphs and charts. The EPA will regularly update the resource and provide the latest information, graphics and commentary on priority wastes, waste infrastructure and trends.

During 2017 the EPA also began migrating all geographic information systems (GIS) into a single mobile friendly application: [gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/](http://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/). The application provides a library of spatial data layers, organised under environmental themes. In November, a new Sewage Treatment interactive map was added to compliment the release of the Urban Waste Water Treatment report: [www.gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/SewageTreatment](http://www.gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/SewageTreatment).

rch: Microplastic  
in Irish Freshwater



ile enabled website,  
information about  
water



JUNE

JULY

EPA publishes the first National Priority Sites for Enforcement



EPA animation: *Back Yard Burning*



EPA Climate Change public lecture by Professor Chris Rapley: *Communicating Climate Change – Why so difficult?*

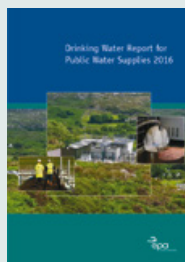
OCTOBER

AUGUST

Water Quality in Ireland 2010-2015 report



Drinking Water Report 2016



SEPTEMBER

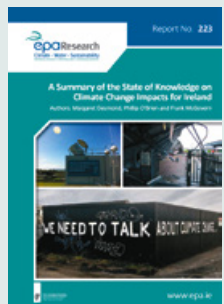
NOVEMBER

Implementation review of the National Inspection Plan for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems



DECEMBER

A Summary of the State of Knowledge on Climate Change Impacts for Ireland report





Environmental Protection Agency  
*An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil*

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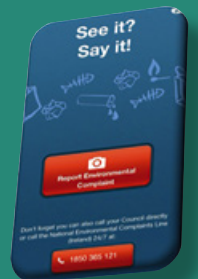
### National Environmental Complaints:

T: 1850 365121

App: See it? Say it?

### Twitter:

@EPAireland  
@EPAClimateNews  
@EPAResearchNews  
@EPAAirQuality  
@EPARadiation  
@Stop\_Food\_Waste  
@EPACatchments  
@EPABeaches  
@EPA\_LiveGreen  
@EPAWasteRes  
@EPAEcology



[www.youtube.com/user/epaireland](http://www.youtube.com/user/epaireland)

