



Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY 2018 in Review

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.



Vision

A clean, healthy and well protected environment supporting a sustainable society and economy.

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

INFORMATION

1,061,411

sessions on www.epa.ie

2,200+

environmental queries from the public

37,600+

EPA Twitter followers

249

EPA datasets uploaded to data.gov.ie (21,614 total views)

6,852

environmental complaints reported (3,200 via See it? Say it? app; 1,606 via the National Environmental Complaints Line; 2,046 direct to EPA, including 897 about licensees)

110

information requests (63 AIE & 47 FOI)

 **epaResearch**
Climate - Water - Sustainability
Identifying pressures • Informing policy • Developing solutions

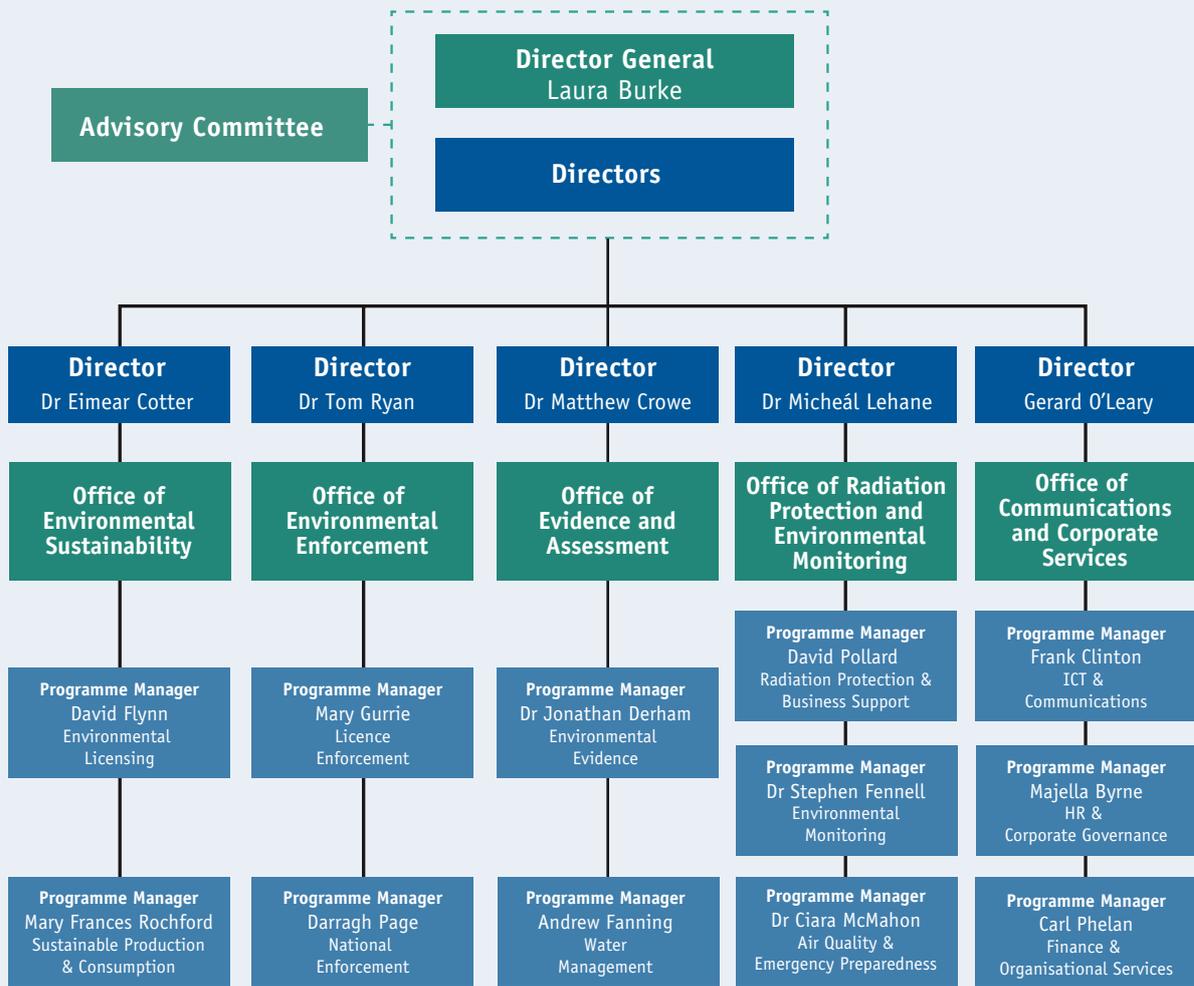
32 research reports published:
Water (8); Climate (14); Sustainability (10)

Good Waste

CHARTER
FOR IRELAND
50% REDUCTION BY 2020

5 major retailers (representing nearly **70%** of the Irish grocery market) signed the Food Waste Charter

Organisational Structure - February 2019



— 2018 in Numbers

LICENCES

94

environmental licences issued

72

technical amendments completed

103

radiation licences issued (74 renewals; 29 new) and 952 technical amendments issued

39

conclusions on Article 27 by-product notifications

1 End-of-waste criteria agreed for LDPE plastic

ENFORCEMENT

315

urban waste water and 61 drinking water site visits

1,530+

visits to industrial, waste, dumping at sea and VOC facilities

28

prosecutions heard

102

inspections of Radiological Licensees

6

drinking water Directions issued to Irish Water

15

sites on the National Priority Sites for Enforcement in 2018; the agri-food and waste sectors accounted for the majority of sites on the list

Strategic Goals for the period 2016-2020

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

2018 in Review

Climate Change

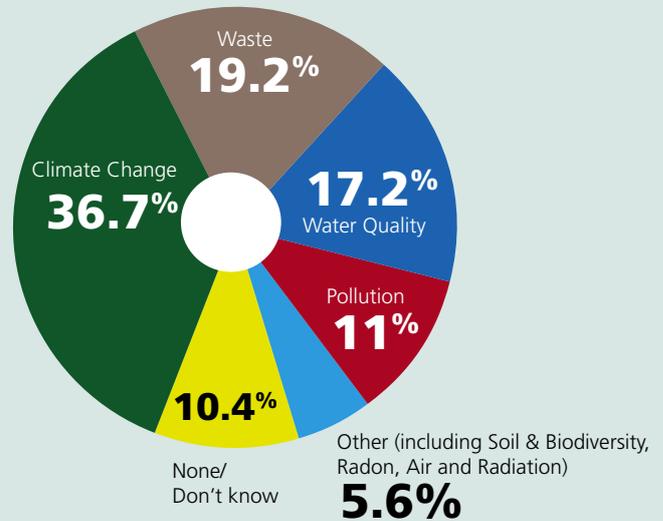
By any measure, we experienced an extraordinary year in 2018 where nature reminded us who is in charge: climate change is now with us and it is affecting us all. Climate change is the most pressing environmental challenge facing us as a nation, an EPA national omnibus survey confirmed in November. More than a third of adults (37%) recognise it as the most pressing issue facing the country while 61 per cent cite it as being within the top three environmental concerns for us to tackle. And while Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions decreased slightly in 2017, EPA projections show that, at best, Ireland will only achieve a one per cent reduction by 2020 compared to its 20 per cent EU reduction target.

This last year has been a turning point in what we need to do to build climate resilience. The EPA supports the implementation, monitoring and assessment of climate action through collating national greenhouse gas emissions and projections, regulating emissions from industrial sectors and through climate science research.

The transition required to achieve a low carbon Ireland has implications for how we heat our homes, travel, produce our food, and protect our wellbeing and environment. Research can help to deliver a sustainable and healthy future. The EPA Research Programme addresses knowledge gaps and provides the evidence base to inform policy-making by government. In 2018, the EPA awarded €12.2 million to fund new environmental research projects, including many on climate issues.

The National Dialogue on Climate Action, a Government of Ireland initiative facilitated by the EPA, is a promising mechanism to link government interventions and local, community initiatives. It is designed to engage people with the challenge of climate

Public Opinion: The most pressing environmental issues facing Ireland today



change. In 2018, the National Dialogue hosted its first two Regional Gatherings, held in Athlone and Tralee. The Gatherings provided a platform for people to have their say on major climate issues facing Ireland. The EPA also hosted two public lectures on the science of climate change, available to view at epa.ie.

Internationally, the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change successfully agreed the rule book needed to implement the 2015 Paris Agreement in December. They also agreed to formally explore the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5° C.

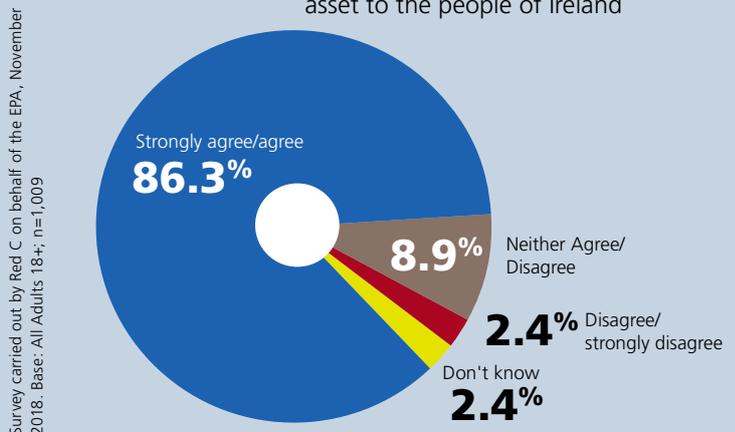
Citizen Engagement

An overwhelming majority of adults in Ireland (86%) recognise the importance of our environment as an asset to the country. In a 2018 EPA national survey, respondents ranked climate change, waste, water quality and pollution as the biggest environmental challenges they see facing the nation.

The EPA plays an important role in raising levels of awareness and supporting initiatives that increase citizen engagement with environmental issues. 2018 saw the completion of the first year of the GLOBE citizen science programme, delivered in partnership by the EPA and An Taisce. Thirteen schools participated in the pan-European spring air quality campaign. Five of the schools were supported by the EPA to present their research at the GLOBE Learning Expedition, an international conference of students and their teachers from 40 countries that was hosted in Killarney last July.

During the year, the EPA launched a [Citizen Science web resource](#) to provide information about national initiatives. Web resources, and formats like infographics, can communicate complex data through visual storytelling and complement more formal reporting. 2018 examples include interactive charts in the

Public Opinion: The environment is a valuable asset to the people of Ireland



Survey carried out by Red C on behalf of the EPA, November 2018. Base: All Adults 18+; n=1,009

[National Waste Statistics](#) web resource and infographics about topics such as home heating choices and their impacts, and household waste composition.

The EPA's The Story of Your Stuff competition also depends on visual storytelling. For a second year, students were asked to submit stories about the life cycle of an everyday object with an underlying theme of sustainability. Entries focused on everything from wellies to wheels. The winning video told the story of chewing gum.



Participants from Larkin College, Dublin, at the GLOBE Learning Expedition in Killarney in July

Environment and Health

While Ireland continues to meet all legal standards for air quality, recent EPA annual Air Quality reports show that levels of air pollution at some locations have exceeded the more stringent, health-related World Health Organization guideline values.

Under the 2017 - 2022 National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme, the number of EPA air monitoring stations more than doubled in 2018 (from 19 in 2017 to 45). The EPA will continue to strengthen the capacity and capability of the air quality network to provide more comprehensive, localised online information linked to public health advice.

Home heating and transport choices need to be tackled. Both directly influence the level of pollution in the air, affecting people's health and life expectancy. Indeed, EPA funded research published in 2018 showed that the move by householders away from fossil fuels, such as coal, to biomass fuels has resulted in a deterioration of air quality in urban areas. The EPA has produced an infographic entitled [Heating your home](#) and its impact on air quality and health.

EPA research completed in 2018 estimates that around 300 cases of lung cancer in Ireland every year are linked to the radioactive gas radon. Accumulation of radon in our homes is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking and around 500,000 people are living in homes with radon concentrations above the acceptable level. To address radon as a public health hazard, the EPA is working with the Government to extend the National Radon Control Strategy, initially rolled out in 2014.

Water

EPA water quality reports released in 2018 indicate that, despite some improvements, water quality in Irish waters deteriorated between 2015 and 2017. The loss of our best quality waters is continuing and a greater focus on protecting the most pristine waters is needed.

Success in addressing serious pollution and reducing fish kill events shows that positive change is possible. The State has put in place substantial additional resources to support local action in addressing the causes of water pollution. The EPA will continue to play its part by providing the science and evidence to support local actions and by reporting regularly on progress.

Failure to treat waste water properly is damaging our rivers and coastal waters. In releasing the latest report on Urban Waste Water Treatment in October, the EPA emphasised that Ireland is not addressing deficiencies in the waste water treatment infrastructure at a fast-enough pace. Treatment at 28 of Ireland's 179 large towns and cities failed to meet standards set to prevent pollution and protect public health. Assessments published in the EPA's annual Bathing Water report showed that seven beaches failed to

Licensing and Enforcement

Licensing decisions underpin the EPA's role in environmental regulation of industrial emissions, intensive agriculture, waste and resources, dumping at sea, and genetically modified organisms. In 2018, the number of decisions issued on industrial and waste licence applications increased in comparison to the previous year. A new online licensing system also went live, almost removing paper handling from the licensing process for large industry and waste.

Launched in 2017, the EPA's National Priority Sites for Enforcement system has become an important enforcement tool to drive environmental compliance at licensed industrial and waste facilities. Licensees that fail to meet environmental standards are targeted by the EPA for further enforcement action. Publication of the National Priority Sites list has focused attention on non-compliant facilities.

JANUARY



EPA's new National Waste Statistics web resource
<http://www.epa.ie/nationalwastestatistics/>

EPA-funded ESRI study: finds a strong link between radon exposure and lung cancer diagnosis in Ireland



Students learn about air quality through citizen science at the EPA-sponsored Green Schools Expo

FEBRUARY

MARCH

EPA issues advice for private well owners affected by Storm Emma



EPA figures show increases in emissions of three of the five key air pollutants



EPA reports that emissions from facilities in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme reduced in 2017, the first time since 2013

APRIL

MAY



New GeoTool to assist with nature conservation in Ireland. Developed by the EPA in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service

Water In Report fo



EPA Gre funding 2018 "I a Circul

make the grade. Urban beaches are under greater pressure than those in more rural locations. Although almost three quarters of Ireland's bathing waters are of 'excellent' quality, more can be done by local authorities, Irish Water, businesses and homeowners to eliminate the sources of bacterial contamination and ensure that contaminated wastewater is correctly collected and treated before being released into the environment.

Meanwhile, the EPA confirmed in the annual Drinking Water Report that drinking water is likely to finally meet current EU standards by 2020, 16 years after the deadline for compliance. While the quality of drinking water in public supplies remains high and most of our water supplies are safe, continued investment is needed to improve the security of water supplies and achieve compliance with current public health standards and new standards, expected by 2020.



Circular Economy



The National Waste Prevention Programme, led by the EPA, supports businesses, homeowners and other sectors to prevent waste and use resources more efficiently. The Programme champions Ireland's transition to a low-carbon, circular economy where waste is minimised and resources are kept within the economy to be used again and again.

During 2018, the National Waste Prevention Programme was reviewed to inform its future direction. A new structure, aligned with the EU Circular Economy Package, will advocate for resource use efficiency and the circular economy through leadership and support. It will focus particularly on the areas of plastics, construction & demolition waste and food waste.

In 2018, the Programme invested €1.8 million in resource efficiency and the sustainable use of resources in Ireland. Initiatives included [Stop Food Waste](#) and [Smart Farming](#). 2018 results for [Smart Farming](#), for example, indicate average cost savings of €7,170 across 50 participating farms with an average reduction of 9 per cent in greenhouse gas emissions. In June, the EPA announced a new €600,000 funding programme to specifically support circular economy innovators working in the areas of food waste, construction & demolition, plastics and eco-design.

EPA regulatory decisions related to by-products and end-of-waste continue to support the circular economy in Ireland.

Waste

In December, the EPA published a National Waste Characterisation study, the first in ten years. Providing insights into what homeowners and businesses put in their bins, it showed that while some waste is still being disposed of incorrectly, considerable improvements have been made. The study's findings will support waste management policy and infrastructure development. It highlights three areas for future focus: plastic, food waste and single use materials.

An EPA review of the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2014-2020, published in October, confirmed that Ireland has also made good progress in managing hazardous waste. Priority actions to 2020 include a stronger focus on hazardous waste prevention and the development of appropriate infrastructure to allow Ireland to become more self-sufficient in treatment and management. The Plan includes an ambition to minimise exports where it is environmentally preferable, and feasible from a technical and economic point of view.

JULY

Industrial and Waste Licence Enforcement Report 2017

Towards a Resource Efficient Ireland: Ireland's National Waste Prevention Programme Annual Report 2017



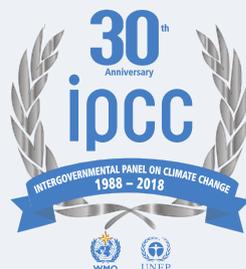
WEEE and Batteries – EPA gains enhanced powers to tackle non-compliance



OCTOBER

AUGUST

Joint event in Dublin marking the 30-year anniversary of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, hosted by the EPA and the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment



NOVEMBER

EPA convenes a broad range of stakeholders for the Moving Ireland into the New Plastics Economy conference.



Focus on Private Water Supplies 2017 report



DECEMBER

Waste Characterisation study



Over 20% of material in the recycling (green) bin should not be there

JUNE



Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

www.epa.ie

Headquarters

PO Box 3000
Johnstown Castle Estate
County Wexford, Ireland, Y35 W821

T +353 53 916 0600

F +353 53 916 0699

E info@epa.ie

LoCall 1890 33 55 99

Twitter: @EPAireland

www.youtube.com/user/epaireland



National Environmental Complaints:

T: 1850 365121

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