



***Briefing Statement***

**Prepared for**

**Public Accounts Committee**

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**Delegation**

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## Introduction

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established in 1993 under the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992 (No. 7 of 1992), as amended. On 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014, the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland merged with the Agency. The Agency headquarters are based in Wexford and there are Regional Inspectorates in Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny, Castlebar and Monaghan.

The EPA operates as a non-commercial, regulatory body. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) is the parent Department to the Environmental Protection Agency and an Oversight Agreement and associated Performance Delivery Agreement has been developed between DCCAE and the EPA. This Oversight Agreement also recognises that the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) has responsibility for drinking water, urban wastewater and water quality and as such the agreement defines the EPA's relationship with DHPLG.

In relation to governance, the Comptroller and Auditor General issued an unqualified audit opinion in respect of our Annual Financial Statements. The EPA is in compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. We have developed and use a framework of assurances that includes an audit and risk committee, internal audits and an executive risk committee.

The mission of the Environmental Protection Agency is to protect and improve the environment as a valuable asset for the people of Ireland and to protect our 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:** We implement effective regulation and environmental compliance systems to deliver good environmental outcomes and target those who don't comply.
- **Knowledge:** We provide high quality, targeted and timely environmental data, information and assessment to inform decision making at all levels.
- **Advocacy:** We work with others to advocate for a clean, productive and well protected environment and for sustainable environmental behaviour.

The work of the EPA is carried out by its five main Offices:

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

Since the EPA was established in 1993 the Agency has grown and matured, providing considerable benefit for Ireland's environment, and for the health and well-being of

our people, and our environmental expertise is recognised as a significant resource both nationally and internationally. As can be seen from our Annual Report 2017 and the information provided below, the EPA has a wide range of functions – with a diverse range of activities including environmental and radiological regulation, the regulation of greenhouse gases through the EU-ETS, the provision of national Greenhouse Gas emissions and inventories, environmental research, water and air quality monitoring and supporting the circular economy. Our work provides the scientific evidence that enables informed decision making, better policy and better information for the public.

The European Commission has published two Environmental Implementation Review Country Reports on Ireland, the first in 2017 and the second in recent weeks. In both reports there is extensive recognition of the work of the EPA. In the 2017 Report, in the ‘Points of Excellence’ section, the Commission recognises that Ireland has implemented a major reform of its waste sector and that the waste sector in Ireland has been transformed, providing useful lessons for other countries. The report also notes that “Inspection planning is well developed in Ireland, going beyond planning of classic industrial inspections” and that “ The EPA provides clear information about the results of its inspections” including “information on prosecutions and fines”. In the 2019 Report , in the “Examples of Good Practice” section the Commission identifies “Ireland is very strong in environmental R&D, attracting many researchers and a lot of early stage green investment” and also notes that “Ireland’s score in the 2018 Environmental Performance Index is 78.77 and it ranks 9 out of 180”.

While we understand that the focus of the Committee’s session is on the Environmental Protection Agency Financial Statements 2017, we appreciate that Members will also be interested in developments during 2017 and 2018 and to this end, summary updates have been provided throughout this document.

## 2017 Annual Accounts

Since the EPA came into existence in 1993, the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office has issued an unqualified audit opinion in respect of each year's Annual Financial Statements (AFS).

The 2017 on-site audit work was completed in the weeks of 23 April and 7 May 2018. The Environmental Protection Agency's 2017 Annual Financial Statements were signed off by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the 21 December 2018.

The Comptroller and Auditor General's report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas notes that:

"I have audited the financial statements of the Environmental Protection Agency for the year ending 31 December 2017 as required under the provisions of section 50 of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992. The financial statements comprise

- the statement of income and expenditure and retained revenue reserves
- the statement of comprehensive income
- the statement of financial position
- the statement of cash flows, and
- the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Environmental Protection Agency at 31 December 2017 and of its income and expenditure for 2017 in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 – *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.*"

## Income and Expenditure

### Income:

The total budget available to the EPA in 2017 was €71M which can be broken down as set out in Table 1 (Figures for 2016 to 2018 are also provided for comparison purposes).

**Table 1: Income**

Income	Audited 2016 € M	Audited 2017 €M	Unaudited Accounts 2018 € M
Exchequer Funding	25.6	32.0	37.5
Environment Fund	12.8	9.8	9.0
Water Services Programme	7.9	7.9	7.0
Earned and Other Income	12.5	12.3	12.8
Actuarial Pension Adjustment	8.0	9.2	8.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>66.8</b>	<b>71.2</b>	<b>75.1</b>

### Main Funding Increases:

The total income has increased by €8.3M, from €66.8M in 2016 to €75.1M in 2018. The Exchequer contribution to Pay and Non – pay has increased by €2.1M from €14.6M to €16.7M, the Pension grant has increased by €1.1M from €3.2M to €4.3M (Lump sums in 2018 €1,030K – Fourteen retirements), Capital has increased by €2.4M (Ambient Air Monitoring Programme, Building Refurbishments and IM&T Investments) and Research increased by €2.4M (€8.5M to €10.9M). The Actuarial Pension adjustment has increased by €0.8M from €8M in 2016 to €8.8M in 2018.

### Exchequer Funding

The Exchequer Funding allocation has historically been based on the Exchequer providing funding for all of the Pension costs, two thirds of the Salary costs and a sum of money for EPA non – Pay.

In 2016, 2017 and 2018, some of EPA Non – Pay funding provided by DCCAE came from the Exchequer and the majority from the Environment Fund.

The Exchequer also provides Capital funding (2016 €2.257M, 2017 €2.95M, 2018 €4.648M) for investment in and replacement of Information Management and Technology assets, Laboratory and Field Equipment, Office Equipment and Furniture and Motor Vehicles for monitoring and sampling work. The increase in 2018 is due to an additional €1.1M allocation for Ambient Air Monitoring Programme, €580K for upgrading of EPA offices and €357K for Climate Information Platform.

## Environment Fund

The Environment Fund was established in 2003 and it has become a significant source of funding for the Agency. In 2016, 2017 and 2018 the Environment Fund supported the National Waste Prevention Programme, the Enforcement programme and an allocation for Non – Pay (2016 €4.938M, 2017 €4.9M, 2018 €4.6M). In previous years, the Environment Fund has also supported the EPA Research programme, providing €3,602K (42.5%) of the research funding from DCCAE in 2016.

EPA recognises that the monies generated by the Environment Fund are reducing steadily and we have been working with our sponsor Department in Government (DCCAE) to reduce the reliance on the Environment Fund and put EPA's funding on a more sustainable footing.

## Water Services Programme:

The EPA's Water Framework Directive work is funded through the Water Quality Programme of Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government (DHPLG). This funding provides for the work that the EPA undertakes under the national water monitoring programme including the monitoring of rivers, lakes, estuaries, groundwaters and coastal waters. It also provides for the technical assessment work and coordination work that the EPA does to support the Minister for Housing Planning and Local Government in the preparation and implementation of River Basin Management Plans which are required under the Water Framework Directive.

## Earned Income

Earned Income (circa €12.5M per annum) is composed mainly of Licence Enforcement Income, income generated from the processing of Licence applications for Environmental and Radiological licences and recovery of the costs of operating the Emissions Trading Unit.

## Expenditure:

The total expenditure of the EPA in 2017 was €70.9M, which can be broken down as set out in Table 2.

Pay and payroll costs (including Pension costs) have increased from €24.9M in 2016 to €28.7M in 2018, an increase of 15.3%. Salary costs (excluding Pension costs) have increased from €21.7M in 2016 to €24.4M in 2018, an increase of 12.4%.

**Table 2: Expenditure**

<b>EPA Pay and Non- Pay costs</b>	<b>Audited 2016 €M</b>	<b>Audited 2017 €M</b>	<b>Unaudited Accounts 2018 €M</b>
Salary costs	21.7	23.2	24.4
Pension costs paid	3.2	3.3	4.3
Non Pay costs	9.8	8.7	10.2
Programme Costs	20.4	21.2	22.1
Capital	4.5	6.3	5.7
Actuarial Pension adjustment (Net)	7.0	8.2	7.8
<b>Total*</b>	<b>66.6</b>	<b>70.9</b>	<b>74.5</b>
Approved Complement	392	392	411

\* The 2017 total Income is shown as €71.2M and total Costs as €70.9M. EPA takes a prudent approach to financial management and has recorded surpluses of less than 1% of turnover, during the years from 2016 to 2018.

As can be seen from Table 1 and Table 2, the EPA budget has increased from €67M in 2016 to €75M in 2018 and the approved staff complement has increased from 392 to 411.

## Corporate Governance

Strong corporate governance is vitally important for the EPA in effectively discharging its statutory remit. It ensures that a framework of structures and processes are in place across the Agency, to allow Board members to objectively and effectively assess management and corporate performance and to meet their own governance responsibilities.

The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies sets out the corporate governance obligations of the various parties responsible for the successful operation of all state bodies. The EPA is subject to the Code and is required to comply with the Code in its governance practices and procedures. Agencies were given to the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017 to action and implement the provisions of the updated Code. The EPA has a Corporate Governance Unit in place with responsibility for overseeing and reporting on the implementation of and compliance with the *Code*.

In line with the roll out of the 2016 Code, the EPA commissioned a gap analysis to compare EPA's current adopted policies, procedures, and practices to provisions in the 2016 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and to identify gaps (if any) which would require action. In April 2017, Crowleys DFK were appointed, by way of competitive tendering, to perform this gap analysis for the EPA. They concluded that:

*'Our assessment noted that the Agency has already made commendable efforts in complying with the provisions in the revised 2016 Code prior to the commencement of our work. It is clear from our dealings with the EPA that the revised 2016 Code and its compliance to same are given a lot of focus and attention by the Agency.'*

The EPA was in compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies for 2018.

As part of the on-going systematic review of the control environment and governance procedures within the EPA, the EPA has established an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) that comprises six external members with relevant expertise and one member from EPA Senior Management. The role of the ARC is to support the Executive Board in relation to its responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance and associated assurance and to ensure that all expenditure, processes and systems are subject to ongoing scrutiny and review. The ARC is independent from the financial management of the organisation and ensures that the internal control systems including audit activities are monitored actively and independently.

The EPA is committed to managing its risks and has a risk management framework in place. An Executive Risk Committee (ERC) and a Chief Risk Officer are also in place. The ERC is responsible for the oversight of risks and controls within the EPA, and works closely with the ARC.



The EPA's internal audit function is adequately resourced and conducts a programme of work agreed with the ARC. Assistance from external expertise acting as Internal Auditors is used to conduct internal audits.

Since its establishment, the EPA has undertaken thirty-eight internal audits and value for money reviews across a broad range of operational areas. Progress on the implementation of the actions required arising from each audit is regularly reviewed and reported to the ARC and the Executive Board.

The EPA Internal Audit Plan 2018–2019 was progressively implemented during 2018, with audits carried out and/or completed in the areas of:

- Absence & Attendance Management;
- Procurement in ICT;
- National Waste Prevention Programme;
- Review of Payroll & Pensions in the EPA; and
- Internal Financial Controls.

The Internal Audit Plan for the period 2019-2020 was also developed during 2018 and reflects the risks identified in the EPA's Corporate Risk Register, the requirements of the Comptroller and Auditor General, and developments and issues in relation to Corporate Governance that have arisen in the Public Sector in general.

The EPA has a suite of policies and procedures available to all EPA employees covering the key areas of governance and internal control.

As required under the *Code*, an Oversight Agreement is in place between DCCAE (parent Department) and the EPA. This Oversight Agreement recognises that the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) has responsibility for a number of areas of direct relevance to the EPA's remit, and so also defines the EPA's relationship with DHPLG.

The EPA's Procurement Officer is located within the Corporate Governance Unit and provides oversight of procurement related activity across the organisation, to ensure compliance with legislation, policies and procedures. The EPA regularly uses Framework Agreements established by the Office of Government Procurement, this practice has brought about efficiencies throughout the procurement function.

## **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. A new online licensing system went live in 2018, removing almost all paper handling from the licensing process for large industry and the waste sector.

During 2017, the environmental licensing programme issued 108 decisions on environmental licences and over 70 technical amendments. In addition, the team dealt with an increasing volume of statutory consultations (640) and contributed to the development of legislation. In relation to radiation protection, the EPA issued 284 licences.

### *EPA Enforcement Strategy*

The EPA's overall enforcement strategy is underpinned by the principles of

- Proportionality in the application of environmental law and in securing compliance
- Consistency of approach
- Transparency about how the EPA operates
- Targeting of enforcement action where it is needed, and
- Implementation of the polluter pays principle.

In applying this policy in respect of licensed activities, the EPA aims to ensure that operators deliver on their responsibilities to carry on their activities in accordance with their EPA licences. These objectives are advanced through a combination of promoting compliance through guidance and assistance, the monitoring of compliance and the taking of enforcement actions where necessary.

Industrial and Waste Licences are enforced by the EPA's Office of Environmental Enforcement (OEE). The EPA assesses compliance with licences on an ongoing basis and it carries out its enforcement role using a number of compliance assessment tools, including desk based assessment, site audits and inspections, water sampling and analysis, air monitoring, odour assessments, noise monitoring, specialist investigation and landfill gas monitoring.

The European Commission's 2017 Environmental Implementation Review Country Report for Ireland concluded that the "EPA has developed a Licencing, Monitoring and Assessment system (LEMA) which allows effective data collection and analysis, risk assessment and targeting of compliance assurance work for industrial installations that are overseen by the EPA itself".

### *National Priority Sites*

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.

## *Prosecution*

Prosecution is an important part of environmental law enforcement. The EPA encourages individuals and businesses to integrate good environmental practices into normal working methods and seeks to prevent environmental pollution before it has a chance to occur. However, where the circumstances warrant it, prosecution is pursued. EPA can initiate a prosecution summarily in the District Court or, in more serious cases, through the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) with a view to prosecution on indictment. Where an offence is committed by a body corporate, EPA can prosecute the company and its officers.

In 2017, 28 Prosecutions of EPA Licensed facilities were heard in the District Court and one with the DPP resulting in the award of fines and costs totaling just over €390,000; in 2018 another 28 cases were heard in the District Court resulting in the award of fines and costs totaling just under €312,000.

## *Financial Provision*

The prevention and remediation of environmental damage and pollution from incidents and from closure of licensed facilities is a strategic priority for the EPA. It is important that there is adequate financial provision in place to manage these environmental risks, protect the environment and minimise the exposure of the State to the cost of remediating environmental damage and pollution when persons carrying out licensed activities fail to do so. The main types of financial provision that are acceptable to the EPA are:

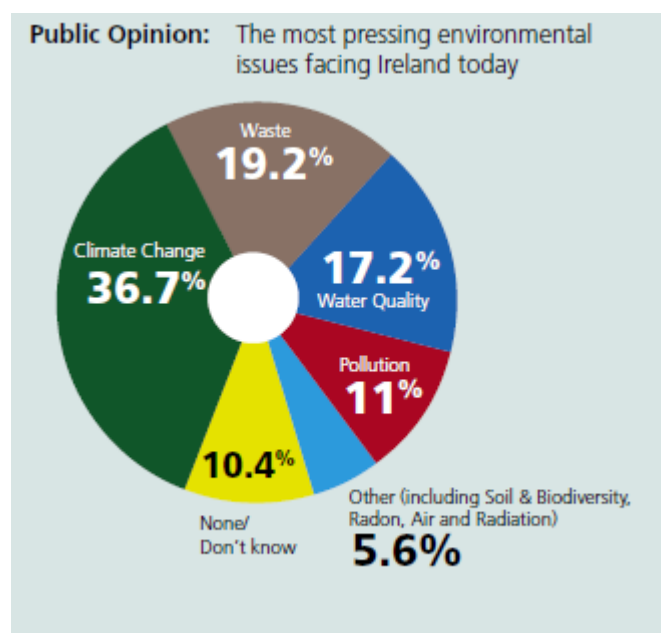
1. Secured fund
2. On demand performance bond
3. Parent company guarantee
4. Charge on property
5. Environmental impairment liability insurance

Financial provision requirements are determined by robust independent analysis and in house expertise. Financial provisions are agreed with licensees only where it is assured that they are **secure** for the duration of the operator's obligations; **sufficient** to meet all the operator's obligations and associated costs; and are **available** to the EPA, when required, to discharge the operator's obligations.

The EPA has a total of €745 million in financial provisions in place for 135 EPA licensed facilities at the end of January 2019.

## Climate Change

The Irish Public consider Climate change as the most pressing environmental challenge facing us as a nation, an EPA national survey confirmed in November 2018. 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 six per cent reduction by 2020 compared to its 20 per cent EU reduction target.



The EPA supports the implementation, monitoring and assessment of climate action through collating national greenhouse gas emissions and projections, regulating emissions from industrial sectors, providing the secretariat to the Climate Change Advisory Council and the National Dialogue on Climate Action, 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. The EPA funded €11.2 and €12.2 million in 2017 and 2018 respectively in 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 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. In 2018, the EPA also hosted two public lectures on the science of climate change, available to view at [epa.ie](http://epa.ie).

## **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 national, regional and 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 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.

## **Air and Radon**

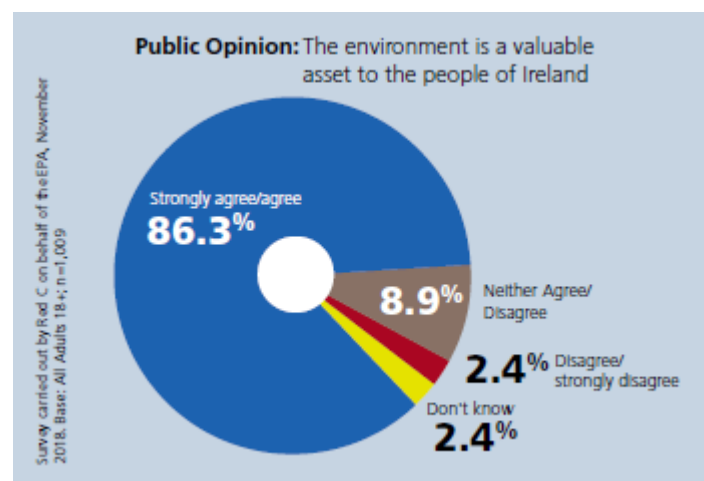
While Ireland continues to meet all legal standards for air quality, recent EPA annual Air Quality reports show that levels of air pollution at some locations have exceeded the more stringent, health-related World Health Organization guideline values.

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

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 update and extend the National Radon Control Strategy, initially rolled out in 2014.

## Citizen Engagement

An overwhelming majority of adults in Ireland (86%) recognise the importance of our environment as an asset to the country. In our 2018 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.

The EPA's The Story of Your Stuff competition centres 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.

## **Waste and Circular Economy**

The EPA contributes to waste prevention and resource efficiency through the National Waste Prevention Programme (NWPP). Many projects are promoted to homes, businesses and other sectors and resulted in significant achievements in 2017.

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 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.

The fifth annual series of farm hazardous waste collections took place in 2017 at ten 1-day nationwide events. The EPA-led campaign reduces environmental risk and improves safety for farm families. Through the five campaigns, farmers have safely disposed of nearly 1000 tonnes of hazardous waste. The Farm Hazardous Waste Scheme won the Excellence Through Collaboration category in November at the annual Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards.

In December 2018, 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.

## **EPA Greening Activities**

The EPA is committed to incorporating good environmental management and practice into our everyday activities and to minimise the environmental impact of our own activities, to achieve continual environmental improvement, to prevent pollution, to encourage environmental awareness with our organisation and to contribute to sustainable development. In keeping with our commitment to lead by example, we have implemented an Environmental Management System (EMS), certified to the international standard ISO14001 since March 2010, to help us manage our impact on the environment from our activities and facilities. The system will be used to set EPA's priorities in its Resource Efficiency Action Plan, in line with Ministers Bruton's initiative across the Public Sector.

Between 2010 and 2016, our energy use has reduced by nearly a fifth; municipal waste production has reduced by nearly two fifths and our recycling rate has increased by nearly one third; water use has reduced by more than half. We are on target to meet our public-sector obligation of 33% of energy savings by 2020.

The EPA has invested in solar photovoltaic at its Wexford offices, biomass heating in Wexford and Cork and installed a new heating system incorporating heat pump technology on its Dublin campus in 2018.

In December 2016, the EPA approved a new *Vehicle Management Policy* with a specific commitment to decarbonise EPA transport. The policy envisages: rationalising the fleet; replacing end-of-life fleet vehicles with low- or zero-emission variants; and raising awareness among staff of the availability and benefits of low emission vehicles. As part of our policy we have electric charging points at all of our EPA Office locations.

## **EPA Workforce Plan**

The EPA's current staff complement is 411, increased from 392 posts in 2018, following the sanction of 19 new posts. The new posts were to fulfil new roles and to address existing resource shortages including in Ambient Air Quality Monitoring, Non-ionising Radiation, Food Waste and the National Dialogue on Climate Action.

In preparing the 2019 Workforce Plan the EPA reviewed its existing resources and functions to ensure that staff were used to best effect across the organisation. This included a review of skills and competencies required to maintain our high standard of service to DCCAIE and to our many stakeholders. The review highlighted a number of resource skills gaps that are emerging in light of new and emerging legislative functions.

The 2019 Workforce Plan was submitted to DCCAIE in September 2018 and there has been ongoing liaison with DCCAIE since then.



## **OECD Review of EPA**

In 2018 and to maintain best practice in regulation and governance, the EPA commissioned the Paris based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to undertake a peer review of the Agency using an international best practice analytical framework. The OECD framework looks at institutions, processes and practices that create an organisational culture of performance and results.

Following the completion of an extensive questionnaire by the EPA in 2018, the OECD commenced the first of a series of fact finding and peer review visits to Ireland in February 2019. The purpose of such visits is to better understand the EPA, our mandate, structure and governance and also to meet with a number of stakeholders including representatives from the Dail Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

The OECD expect to complete their work by the end of 2019 with a publication of a report in early 2020. Similar to previous international reports the OECD will make findings and recommendations to improve EPA's organisational impact both internally and externally. The preparation of the final report will draw on the experiences of more than 80 regulators from network sectors, including energy, communications, transport and water.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we in the EPA are proud of our achievements in environmental protection over the last 26 years. The Board and staff of the EPA take our corporate governance responsibilities seriously as demonstrated in our comprehensive and robust governance and management systems and procedures. We will continue to implement best practice governance procedures. We will also continue to work with the Comptroller Auditor General, our Audit Committee and others to remain in compliance with the Revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and deliver value for money. In addition, we will continue to maintain the high reputation we have worked so hard to achieve over many years with all our stakeholders, both nationally and with the European Commission and in doing so deliver on our mandate.