

# DÁIL ÉIREANN

---

## AN COMHCHOISTE UM CHUMARSÁID, GNÍOMHÚ AR SON NA HAERÁIDE AGUS COMHSHAOL

## JOINT COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS, CLIMATE ACTION AND ENVI- RONMENT

---

*Dé Céadaoin, 11 Iúil 2018*

*Wednesday, 11 July 2018*

---

The Joint Committee met at 1.30 p.m.

---

### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Timmy Dooley,	Senator Terry Leyden,
Deputy Eamon Ryan,	Senator Tim Lombard,
Deputy Brian Stanley,	Senator Joe O'Reilly.

DEPUTY HILDEGARDE NAUGHTON IN THE CHAIR.

*The joint committee met in private session until 1.41 p.m.*

### **Scrutiny of EU Legislative Proposals**

**Chairman:** I draw the attention of witnesses to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(I) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by the Chairman to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

I also advise witnesses that any submission or opening statement they have made to the committee will be published on the committee web page after this meeting.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I remind members to turn off their mobile phones as they interfere with the sound system.

The purpose of today's meeting is further scrutiny of EU legislative proposal COM (2018) 340, which is a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment. Briefing material on this proposal has been circulated to members. The proposal is listed under Schedule A. I welcome the witnesses to the meeting to discuss the proposal with our joint committee. We are joined by Mr. Matthew Collins, assistant secretary, and Mr. Kevin O'Donoghue, principal officer, from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. I ask Mr. Collins to give us a brief on the proposal.

**Mr. Matthew Collins:** I will give the members of the committee a brief introduction to the proposal. As the Chairman knows, the European Commission published its proposal for a regulation on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment on 28 May 2018. This is part of the important agenda of Europe's transition to a circular economy. The main objective of this initiative is the prevention and reduction of plastic marine litter from single-use plastic items and fishing gear containing plastic by complementing the measures already envisaged under the EU plastic strategy. Ultimately, the proposal will further reinforce the EU's systemic approach to this issue. The proposal is designed to complement the EU's established legislative framework in the fields of waste and water. These include matters such as the waste framework directive, packaging and packaging waste directives, the marine strategy framework directive and a number of other waste directives, including those concerning wastewater.

The Department greatly welcomes the proposal to tackle the problems posed by plastic single-use items. The Minister had strongly urged the Commission to tackle this issue urgently. We believe that working proactively with our European colleagues, we will achieve a greater environmental benefit. The problem of marine litter is transboundary by nature as marine litter can originate in and affect different countries. Joint action is particularly effective in this con-

text. Marine litter can be more effectively prevented and reduced through a coherent approach of policy and measures at EU level, while ensuring a single European market for the general public with high environmental standards and legal certainty for businesses.

**Chairman:** Do members have any questions?

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** I was the one who raised this issue. I wanted the committee to engage in further scrutiny of the proposal, against the advice in the Department's note, or the wider advice note. The provisions contained in this European draft directive mirror pretty much exactly, if the key provisions are boiled down, the provisions we set out in our Waste Reduction Bill, which the Dáil approved on Second Stage over a year ago. We have done some very good, detailed research. The Library & Research Service has done a lot of good work that has been very useful in looking at the consequences. This is a highly complex issue, particularly the introduction of a deposit refund scheme. There are all kinds of complex estimates that must be worked out, including how much money would be raised from the plastics and cans that would be recycled, the level of recycling that would be achieved with the scheme and what the scheme would cost to operate. The Library & Research Service did really good work reviewing all the various international examples that give us the broad parameters of what would be involved.

I fundamentally disagree with the Department if I heard Mr. Collins right when he said this is a transboundary issue and that marine litter must be dealt with on a transboundary basis. In fact, it seems clear from the European legislation that they are looking for national governments to legislate. Anyone who has been out during this beautiful summer on any beach, canal or river will know we have a huge litter problem, particularly with plastic bottles and cans at the most sensitive sites. This is not just an international, transboundary issue; it is a local litter issue.

The Minister agrees with the provisions of our Bill relating to the banning of certain plastic items, which again mirrors what is in the directive. We agree with him on the introduction of a levy on plastic cups in an attempt to switch to the compostable variety. The only thing on which he disagrees with us is the introduction of a deposit refund scheme.

There is every indication the directive will be passed. I do not hear a single voice in the European Parliament opposing it. It will not be contentious. I do not believe a single voice in the European Council is against it. There may be, but it will be carried, it seems to me. It is hugely politically and publicly popular. There is an obligation within it that by 2025 we would have to have a 90% recycling rate for plastic bottles, for example. The Department's own note states that, if it is agreed within a year, we will have to have a two-year post-agreement before we then legislate, which again mirrors exactly the provisions within our Bill, which does not demand that the Department do something instantaneously, but rather provides for such a two-year period to process all the details. Given all this, and given that the industry representatives, who took a negative position on our Bill in our hearings here, have met me recently and said I was right that the European directive matches exactly what is in our Bill, why should we not proceed, or why would the Department argue we not proceed? How does the Department intend to achieve a 90% recycling rate and meet the estimates set out in the provision? This was debated at the Dáil reform sub-committee yesterday evening, where we sought senior counsel's advice on the idea that the only mechanism we may have is to take legal action with the European Union once this legislation is put through to show up the failing of the Irish Government to take seriously its obligations in respect of environmental legislation. This is why I wanted to bring the proposal before the committee for further consideration. I do not believe the advice that this does not have consequences; I believe it does. We should proceed to Committee Stage to tease out any differences of views on the introduction of a deposit refund scheme. In

the absence of that, for the Department just to say we need more analysis and not to have any proposals itself as to how we might meet the 90% target rate we face would be a dereliction of duty on our part as a Parliament.

**Chairman:** Does Mr. Collins wish to reply?

**Mr. Matthew Collins:** The Deputy raises a number of issues. To be clear, we greatly welcome this proposal. It is very valuable in providing the ability and powers for member states to take actions in this area. It is not I who am saying this is transboundary. In terms of disagreeing with the transboundary nature, it is the European Commission that considers this a transboundary issue. The material we are talking about has been identified as the majority of waste litter arising in the marine environment. The materials can arise in one member state and affect another. It is not that we are arguing that it has to be a transboundary issue; the reality of the environment means that it is transboundary in nature, and the European Commission agrees.

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** One could say that it is both local and transboundary.

**Mr. Matthew Collins:** I was asked if it would be accepted in Europe. I certainly hope it would be accepted. Negotiations will have to take place in the European Parliament and at Council. I hope it will proceed quickly. I think it has already been prioritised by the Austrian Presidency as one of the issues it wants to progress as quickly as possible. I am sure there will be considerable support in the European Parliament. Member states have, at both official and ministerial level, been pushing this action very vociferously for a long time with the European Commission.

I was asked how we would respond. That is the normal way we approach much of the legislation that would appear. The Commission is very clear that it is open to member states as to how they reach whatever targets are set. The Commission's proposal is open in that sense. It could be an extended producer-responsibility scheme as we currently operate and which has been operating very successfully or it could be a deposit-and-return scheme. Both options are on the table. In that sense, it is slightly different from the Bill. I know we are not discussing the Bill, but the Deputy mentioned it. The Bill provides for it to be mandatory, whereas the Commission's proposal leaves it open to the member states to determine the scheme most suitable to their circumstances. They recognise that the same-structure schemes have different types of performance levels in different member states. We need to understand how to achieve that target. We do not have a preconceived view that it must be done in a particular way; we want to discover what options would actually deliver on the targets.

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** We have been working on this for a number of years; I am sure the Department has been working on it even longer. Our *per capita* plastic waste is twice the European average. We are facing a European tax system which may tax countries on the amount of plastic waste that is not recycled. This is not without consequence as well as being a local, environmental and transboundary environmental issue. Having done all this work on the issue, how does the Department intend to meet a target of having 90% of plastic bottles recycled as per the directive?

**Mr. Matthew Collins:** The circular economy package established a combination of targets and actions. We will not focus on a single item, we need to develop a new policy to address the entire remit under the circular economy package. This will be a key element of it, but a number of areas will need to be covered as part of that.

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** We do not disagree on the range of other measures. The Minister has made it clear that he supports the various measures in our Bill and contained in the directive. The only point of difference is on how to get to 90% recycling of plastic bottles. What does Mr. Collins believe is the best option in that regard?

**Mr. Matthew Collins:** More work needs to be done to decide on the best option. We are not in a position to say what the best option is at this stage. This issue requires more analysis. I do not think the Minister has said he has no objections; he has signalled that he is concerned about the cost of the deposit-return scheme, DRS, proposed in the Bill. We want to establish how we can achieve high-level targets in a cost-effective manner.

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** The Department does not have a proposal as to how we would do this.

**Mr. Matthew Collins:** We are examining it. We need to build up an evidence base before we come forward with a proposal.

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** We have been debating this issue-----

**Mr. Matthew Collins:** That is the approach the Commission has taken. The Commission is leaving it open to the member states to look at their own national circumstances and determine the best way of achieving the proposals. At this stage, it is a proposal and there are a number of stages involved. The Commission would never approach us at this stage to ask us how we will achieve it. The Commission has made a proposal that has to be approved by the Council and the European Parliament. There is a timeframe for implementation of the objectives thereafter. Then the objectives will be set with certain dates as well.

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** This cross-questioning is useful because we have been refused public debate. I would love to be able to sit down and work out various cost estimates or, indeed, any other proposals. Thereafter, the Bill could be amended. A lot of very good work has been done, particularly including two international examples.

While the Commission does not direct exactly which mechanism should be used, at various points in its circular economy package and directives it specifically puts forward the DRS as one of the very effective ways of doing it. Having talked to industry people and other experts in the area, having gone through this process in the past year, we know of no other mechanism that would achieve what will be an obligatory target when the directive goes through, as I expect it will.

Parliament has been considering this in real detail. It is not appropriate to shirk the responsibility and say that we will wait a few more years when the Department does not have an alternative proposal. If the Department had an alternative proposal with a better way of doing it, there would be a valid argument that we could debate on Committee Stage. After a year of extensive research, it is inappropriate for the Department to say it needs to do more research. I assure Mr. Collins that the research will come up with no conclusion. It is not possible to get an exact figure because it is such a complicated costing exercise involving multiple variables. For example, how can we apply a figure to the cost of the litter that is polluting our country this summer? It is very difficult to put a price on that. It is very difficult to debate it when the Minister is refusing to allow the Bill to proceed to Committee Stage and the Department does not have an alternative proposal. It would bring shame on this Parliament if we were to wait for everyone else to legislate in respect of this matter.

**Mr. Matthew Collins:** I do not think there is any proposal to wait and let everybody else legislate first. It is not that we do not have a proposal. We have a fully-functioning and operational extended producer-responsibility scheme that is achieving and far exceeding its existing targets. That is the current status. We do not yet have a mandatory obligatory target. The Commission will admit that this is a proposal. We are very hopeful that it will be approved. However, no targets have been set yet. It is subject to negotiation at the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament.

Different countries have many varied experiences. We need to understand the dynamics within countries. For example, Belgium does not have a DRS and is achieving the current recycling target of 86%. Is a DRS the only solution to this problem? I cannot say that it is; we do not have enough evidence to say that is the current situation in Ireland.

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** Does Mr. Collins believe-----

**Chairman:** I will let Mr. Collins finish and then I will let the Deputy in.

**Mr. Matthew Collins:** In progressing the concept of a DRS, we said we would implement a pilot to have a much better understanding of how such a scheme would operate in Ireland. As a result of discussions with the environmental pillar, it has been agreed not to proceed with the pilot. That is in accordance with the views of the NGO pillar, as I said. As a result, we will not be doing that. Instead, it has been agreed that we will carry out a national study on a full implementation of how a DRS would operate in Ireland. Those are the actions we are taking. At this stage, when we have examples of these schemes enjoying high and low performance in different countries and also examples of countries, including Ireland, that have good performance or high performance - as is the case with Belgium, which does not have a DRS - it is not really feasible for me to say what is the best or the only option with which we should proceed at this point.

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** I am glad the Department has abandoned the idea of the pilot scheme, which I thought was mad. I was in Cashel last weekend and I wondered how we could possibly get any sort of scientific results from it other than having some kind *cordon sanitaire* around the town whereby we would know that the plastic bottles used there would remain there. I am glad the Department has moved away from that.

Further to the agreement with Irish environmental pillar, when does Mr. Collins expect that research to be concluded? Given that we are all of the view that the legislation will be passed in Europe, do Mr. Collins and Mr. O'Donoghue believe that our current system could deliver the 90% target that the Department's information note indicates will need to be in place in two years? Regardless of what happens in Belgium, does Mr. Collins believe the system here could deliver the more than 90% recycling rate we seek?

**Mr. Matthew Collins:** There would not be any value in me giving a personal opinion. I need to find the evidence to indicate the best way of achieving that target.

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** The best way is the DRS. I would like to debate that with the Minister on Committee Stage but he refuses to do so. The majority of Members of the House agree with that view but they are being blocked by a Government which refused to even debate the issue.

**Chairman:** The Bill will be separate to this EU legislative proposal. I accept that the Deputy is raising it because there is an overlap in terms of reducing the impact of plastic products.

Mr. Collins has to leave at 2 p.m. Is it agreed that there are no subsidiarity issues with this EU legislative proposal?

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** No. I cannot agree with it. There clearly are subsidiarity issues.

**Chairman:** Is the Deputy saying that it requires further scrutiny?

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** I would not like the matter to be closed. I do not know how we could argue that it does not involve subsidiarity issues when it is clear that will be the case.

**Chairman:** Is it agreed that this EU legislative proposal requires further scrutiny?

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** Agreed.

**Senator Tim Lombard:** What are we proposing in terms of further scrutiny?

**Chairman:** We could say that on 11 July the committee agreed to forward a report of its political contribution to Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, Mr. Antonio Tajani, MEP, President of the European Parliament, Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Deputy Denis Naughten. We could further agree that in the interest of interparliamentary co-operation on EU matters, a copy of our report be forwarded to the appropriate committee in the national parliament of EU member states and each of Ireland's MEPs. The secretariat would have to draw up a report-----

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** I would appreciate it if we could take that course of action. I thank the Chairman.

**Chairman:** Is that agreed? Agreed. I thank Mr. Collins and Mr. O'Donoghue for coming before the committee. We will suspend the meeting to allow the witnesses to leave and our the next group to come in.

*Sitting suspended at 2.03 p.m. and resumed at 2.08 p.m.*

### **Illegal Dumping: Discussion**

**Chairman:** We will now discuss environmental destruction issues in light of the "RTÉ Investigates" programme into the increasing problem of illegal dumping in Ireland, with particular reference to Donegal.

I wish to draw the witnesses' attention to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the joint committee. However, if they are directed by the Chairman to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or an entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. I advise that any submission or opening statement made to the committee will be published on its website after the meeting. Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses

## ILLEGAL DUMPING: DISCUSSION

or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. I remind members and witnesses to turn off their mobile phones as they interfere with the sound system and our televised broadcasting service. They should switch them to flight mode.

I welcome our witnesses. They are here to engage with the joint committee on illegal dumping and environmental issues. I advise the witnesses that they should refrain from commenting on any ongoing court proceedings. We have a limited time for this session. We have agreed to conclude at 3 p.m. because we have a meeting of the special committee on climate change later this afternoon. If some of the questions are not answered by the time we conclude proceedings, the witnesses might submit written replies to the committee in respect of them. I ask the witnesses to be as brief as possible in making their opening statements because it will allow members more time to engage with them; members have read their written statements.

From the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, I welcome Mr. Gerard O’Leary, deputy director general, Ms Mary Gurrie, programme manager, and Mr. Mick Henry, senior inspector. From Donegal County Council I welcome Mr. Seamus Neely, chief executive, Mr. Michael McGarvey, director of services for water and environment, and Mr. Sean Scott, waste enforcement regional lead authority and Leitrim County Council. From Offaly County Council I welcome Mr. Sean Murray, director of services for water services, environment and the national waste collection permit office.

I invite Mr. O’Leary from the EPA to make his presentation.

**Mr. Gerard O’Leary:** I will not read the statement but touch on three points.

**Chairman:** That would be fantastic.

**Mr. Gerard O’Leary:** I will be happy to answer questions afterwards. We welcomed the “RTÉ Investigates” programme. From an EPA point of view, it highlighted some of the challenges we face in regulating the waste sector. There are other regulators in the area and I have detailed those in our paper.

We have concerns about the waste sector. While I have pointed to some successes we have had in regulating the sector and the 200-odd activities we regulate, many of the successes have been achieved by dragging companies through the courts system. We do not see the sector coming voluntarily. I suppose I am comparing it to other sectors. We did a review between 2009 and 2013. A total of 40% of our prosecutions were in the waste sector. Regarding the total activities we regulate, between waste and industry, we regulate approximately 800, 200 of which are in the waste sector, so the committee can see that a lot of time is consumed by one sector compared to the other 600.

I cannot recall any other sector that we regulate that has changed so dramatically in the past number of years. Essentially, we now regulate the private sector. We have had to evolve some of our enforcement strategies over the years. I will discuss one of the changes we made two years ago, which, again, has been successful. Across the 800 activities we regulate, we have five regions. We used to be all paper but we are now all electronic and, therefore, we get intelligence much faster than was the case previously. Every three months, we publish on our website the list of activities that are not just regulated by local offices but involve national enforcement. That involves all sections of the EPA in trying to bring what is a small cohort back into compliance. We will publish again next month because the three months are up. The small cohort within the waste sector has featured on those national priority lists so it is something we

will publish every three months. Of the activities on the national list, approximately half of them have been prosecuted. We are bringing the most non-compliant activities to the surface and adopting a national approach.

The third issue, which I touched upon and which was featured in the programme, is the fact that we have published three reports on the performance of local authorities with regard to their environmental functions. While the programme focused solely on waste, we cover air and water activities. In the first report we published in 2014, we determined that approximately one third of local authorities' performance in waste enforcement was poor. At that stage, we had pressed for something that was in an earlier Government policy statement in 2012, namely, the establishment of three lead local authorities that would support local authorities. Thankfully, they are now in place. While we can see an improvement in 2017, I do not want to suggest to the committee that just because of the establishment of these lead local authorities, everything will be solved but it is a step in the right direction.

**Chairman:** I thank Mr. O'Leary for keeping it brief. That was about three minutes so I might ask all our other witnesses to keep to three minutes if possible.

**Mr. Seamus Neely:** Like Mr. O'Leary, I will touch on a couple of points. The programme touched on staffing and resources quite a bit. I wish to draw the committee's attention to the fact that Donegal County Council has 14 staff assigned to waste and litter management and enforcement, which puts us mid-table. There are 15 local authorities with more staff and 15 with the same or fewer staff. From the middle of last year, we put together a business plan and a commitment to put additional staffing in place. That will come to fruition in quarter three of this year at which stage we will have 19 staff in place, which will make us the fifth most resourced council in the country in respect of waste and litter enforcement and regulation.

I had intended to draw attention to the waste enforcement regional lead authorities but Mr. O'Leary has done so but I reiterate that this has been a great step forward for local authorities. It is early days and as time goes on, we will see the full value of them. However, they must be complemented by activity by the local authorities at individual level and resourced accordingly.

I do not agree with the metric that was used on RTÉ 1 for Donegal's place in the rankings. It is a mixture of rating and ranking and the number of permits in place per head of population was a factor. It is a useful metric to look at but it does not capture the entirety of what we are dealing with on a day-in and day-out basis. I believe the resources we had in place were sufficient at the time. We took a particular decision in the middle of last year to augment those significantly having regard to recent experiences and I will keep that area of resource application under continuous review with a firm commitment to provide additional specific resources for at least a five-year period.

I mentioned threats and risks to enforcement staff and collaboration with other agencies generally. Regulation and enforcement of waste laws is a concern for Donegal County Council and local authorities in general. It is recognised that waste is a commodity. When it is traded illegally, it can generate considerable financial benefit for those involved. In enforcing and managing that, councils and all other enforcement agencies come across people who are capable of doing things that are not always normal. This has happened in Donegal. There have been incidents where staff have been intimidated. There have been particularly insidious events which are problematic in themselves. My report largely speaks for itself regarding the three cases that were referred to in the television programme.

## ILLEGAL DUMPING: DISCUSSION

I indicated in the report that I would give a brief update about works that were ongoing at the time of writing on the site in Moville. Works have continued on that site in the interim. When the programme was aired, the incidents at that site were brought to the attention of the council for the first time. There was new information and they were immediately treated as complaints that required investigation. An investigation of these complaints is ongoing and all aspects of what was shown and said on the programme will be thoroughly examined. RTÉ has been contacted to secure available evidence. As part of the investigation, the council determined that it needed to excavate one particular area. It was an area that was described in the programme as almost 200 mounds. The excavations were carried out under council direction last week. The owners of the site were not present at during the excavations but had an observer present. Each mound, which was, typically, to a maximum height of 2 metres, was excavated and found to be made of shale, rock and soil. Isolated items such as tyres, of which there were approximately ten in total across the entire excavation, were found within the mounds. In the course of that excavation of the featured mounds, the mound featured more closely in the programme, which was different in appearance to the others, was also excavated. It contained some waste, which included a section of carpet; a set of curtains; a number of glass bottles; agricultural material like bale, cord, netting and some straw; and a small plastic container that was used in agriculture. No evidence of general municipal waste was found in any of the other mounds excavated. A number of loads of material that seemed to be of a construction and demolition origin and materials from agriculture and the fishing industry, some of which are overgrown, still need to be addressed at the south eastern side of that site. However, the area that was described as 200 mounds has been excavated and found to be largely made up of shale, rock and soil. I will leave it at that. I thank members for their time.

**Chairman:** Our final witness is Mr. Sean Murray, director of services for environment, water services and the National Waste Collection Permit Office at Offaly County Council.

**Mr. Sean Murray:** Like my colleagues, I will go through highlights of my submission to the committee. The National Waste Collection Permit Office, NWCPO, was established since 1 February 2012. Section 34 of the Waste Management Act requires that any person collecting waste for profit, reward or otherwise in the course of business to hold a waste collection permit. They are obliged by law to do so. A total of 2,010 waste collection permits are extant. The primary role of my office is the processing of waste collection permit applications, the maintenance of the waste collection permit register and the ongoing administration of the permits. The NWCPO is certified to ISO9001. The permit process involves an applicant completing an application form in a prescribed format. One of the major areas of relevance to the permit process and permit applications is that the person requiring a permit is a fit and proper person, as defined under section 34 D of the Waste Management Act. A person is not a fit and proper person where any one of the following applies: they have been convicted of a prescribed offence under environmental legislation; they do not have the requisite technical knowledge or qualifications to carry out the activity in accordance with the waste collection permit; they are not likely to be in a position to carry out and meet any commitments or liabilities that will arise; they have previously had a waste collection permit revoked; or the applicant has had a court order made against him or her under section 57 or 58 of the Act.

The permit granted includes a standardised set of conditions including: only authorising the collector to collect specified waste types; use specified waste facilities; use specified waste vehicles; and collect in a specified local authority area. Where breaches of waste collection permits occur the NWCPO does not enforce the conditions of the waste collection permits as this role rests with each individual local authority for their jurisdictional area. The office, however,

works in conjunction with local authorities where non-compliance has been identified and can review and revoke waste collection permits as deemed appropriate.

The office relies on the local investigations undertaken by local authorities in determining the review of a waste collection permit. Local authorities can issue fixed payment notices for breaches of specified permit conditions and issue warnings or enforcement notices where other breaches are identified. These are all based on the Act.

Where the NWCPO reviews a waste collection permit, this review can result in a direction to take corrective measures or the complete revocation of a waste collection permit. A permit can be revoked where a permit holder is no longer deemed to be a fit and proper person, as defined in the Act, to hold a permit.

**Chairman:** I thank Mr. Murray. Perhaps he will take note of some of the questions that members may ask, either those directed at him or if he wants to comment on a particular question. We will start with Deputies Dooley and Stanley, and Senator Terry Leyden.

**Deputy Timmy Dooley:** I welcome all the participants and I thank them for the information they have provided. Mr. O’Leary said that he welcomed the “RTÉ Investigates: Ireland’s Wild Waste” programme and that he accepted problems exist. He spoke about the resources and about the change the EPA has had to go through. Does he believe that the EPA has adequate resources to make that change? He took the committee through the steps and said that the agency was responding to the difficulties in the sector. He also said that a large chunk of the agency’s work relates to waste management and that this has been a drag on its resources. Is the agency adequately resourced to address the situation it now finds itself in?

I thank Mr. Neely for his presentation in which he seems to take a slightly different tack on the programme and he questions if Donegal County Council was treated fairly, which is a valid question from his perspective. To the uneducated observer watching the programme it painted Donegal in an exceptionally bad light. This is why I find it difficult to understand him when he said that he felt the council had adequate resources at the time. Perhaps it did but in light of the programme does he believe that the council had adequate resources? With the benefit of hindsight, or with the benefit of the programme, does he accept that the council needs a considerably increased level of resource deployed in that area?

Mr. Neely also said that some of his council staff encounter intimidation, which is a serious issue. How many incidents of this type of intimidation have been reported to the Garda? How many prosecutions have taken place as a result of that or what follow-up activity has taken place by the Garda? Have the incidents been treated in a manner that Mr. Neely is happy with? Has this work been tracked? This goes to the nub. It does not matter if one has three times the staff working in this area, if there is insidious behaviour or threats and intimidation, then I can understand how a public servant is not going to put his or her life, or his or her family’s lives, at risk. One hopes the authorities would treat this seriously on another level. It is not just because of the impact on the environment, which is huge, but also because if a person is involved in that behaviour and yet feels they are part of a legitimate business there is no place for those companies to have any role or to be given any licence. It is important that this issue be addressed adequately by the justice system.

**Chairman:** Will the witnesses please bank those questions and I will come back to them?

**Deputy Brian Stanley:** I thank Mr. O’Leary, Mr. Neely and Mr. Murray for their presenta-

tions. The “RTÉ Investigates” programme highlighted a number of things that are happening across the State. It showed that not all cowboys wear big hats and ride horses. Some questions were raised by the witnesses about the methods used by RTÉ in Donegal. Footage showed us what is happening on the ground in the county and regardless of what language or metrics one uses to dress it up, it did not paint a pretty picture. There were mounds of waste described as being 2 m high on the Inishowen Peninsula but they looked more substantial than that on the camera. I was in that area last year. It is a lovely part of the country and what is going on there with regard to waste is criminal.

As Deputy Dooley asked, if members of staff are being threatened, which should not be happening, is there adequate follow up from the Garda? If not, why not?

Will Mr. O’Leary tell the committee how many waste licences have been revoked? Mr. Neely from Donegal County Council has said that it is moving from 14 to 19. Clearly there is a problem. I had heard of the programme but could not see it on the night it was broadcast so I watched a repeat. One of the waste facilities is beside a large river. There were problems with the licence but it was renewed again for that waste collector. A substantial amount of the activity at that site, which is right at the edge of the river, is concerning. Will Mr. Neely explain how Donegal County Council came to the conclusion that this location was okay for such a substantial waste facility, especially where the operator and owner may not have complied with all the regulations, or may not have engaged in best practice in waste handling?

I shall now turn to the EPA. I recall the national permit office being set up under Offaly County Council. With regard to Mr. Murray’s brief, who goes to the county council for a permit and who goes to EPA for a licence? It would help public representatives, and others, to know that. Should the EPA administer the licensing system? I am not saying that Offaly County Council is inefficient, as it deals with the permits regularly, but is the process more convoluted when individual local authorities must get their permits through a county council? Would it be more efficient if it was handled through the EPA?

Will the witnesses also comment on whether the fines are high enough?

Offaly County Council has no role in the investigations. That was my understanding and Mr. Murray has clarified the matter. The council just hands out the permits. However, Mr. Murray also mentioned in his presentation that fit persons with technical knowledge could obtain a licence. Will he give us a definition of the requisite technical knowledge or qualifications required to carry out the activity? That is obviously important. It is also important to note, as Mr. Murray has clarified, that the problem has multiplied several times since the system was privatised. Privatisation has brought us a lot of illegal dumping and bad environmental practice, which is obviously a challenge.

I have a further question for Offaly County Council. There is talk of some county councils bringing forward by-laws to ensure each household will have a legal method of disposing of household waste. I have a Bill that has passed First Stage in the Dáil that would do this in the case of private rental accommodation. I am not saying the problem is down solely to people who live in rental accommodation, whether it is private accommodation or social or local authority housing. My question is this. Could something similar be done throughout the country to ensure all households would have legal means of disposing of their waste and having their waste collected?

**Senator Terry Leyden:** A number of delegates have turned up today at the request of the

joint committee and Deputy Timmy Dooley who was concerned by the “RTÉ Investigates” programme. It is very good for the committee to provide an opportunity for the delegates to put forward their views on the programme which I did not see. I understand from my councillor colleagues in Donegal County Council, of which Mr. Neely is chief executive, that the council is doing its utmost to solve the problem. The members of the council are very concerned about the issues raised and the council has taken appropriate action to deal with what was raised at the time. That is what I understand the position to be. Donegal is a very large county and it is very hard to watch every cowboy who is likely to start dumping somewhere in it. I do not know the extent of the problem.

Offaly County Council controls the situation. Is the system fit for purpose or would it be better to delegate in order that councils would have more control in the granting of licences? This arrangement was brought forward when I was a councillor. It must be more than 15 years since it was brought forward, but perhaps not. Perhaps it has happened since I was a councillor, but there was great debate at the time about licences and waste disposal. RTÉ has done the State some service. When we pay the licence fee, it helps to know that it carries out these investigations. It is a pity that the Environmental Protection Agency is not more active. It could engage in more surveillance and not rely on RTÉ to find out what is happening in the countryside.

**Deputy Eamon Ryan:** I will be brief because a lot of the questions I wanted to ask have been asked.

I commend RTÉ for what was really good investigative journalism and an important public service. That we are not strong on environmental regulations enforcement is something we can see at Government level. There is another report out today, the latest from the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. We are doing well in meeting the social targets, but when it comes to environmental targets, we are ranked very poorly. We are ranked particularly badly under the headings of responsible consumption and production, the waste target set within the sustainable development goals. This is an independent finding in one of many reports. We have a problem at Government level. The programme highlighted a problem in the regulation of industry, in this case, the waste industry. We also have a problem at local level.

I must say to the representative from County Donegal that I love the county. I go there every year and it is most spectacular. I will never forget a walk I took around Bloody Foreland a couple of years ago when the amount of fly-tip waste strewn around the place was just incredible. It was heart-wrenching that such a beautiful place had been ruined. That is just a personal experience, but it brings home the various levels at which we need to take environmental regulations enforcement seriously. I am very interested in the issue of intimidation, about which it is critical that we hear more. It is a real concern. How can we regulate if people are being intimidated? How can we have laws that will work?

I have two or three further questions. I wish to ask the local authorities, Offaly and Donegal County Councils, about the fly-tipping issue which I know is slightly different from the one highlighted in the programme. Yesterday I talked to somebody about the issue of enforcement of litter and fly-tipping regulations. The example about which we spoke was that when council proceeded with a prosecution, a €100 fine was applied. It costs the guts of €800 to go through the process. Does that hamper regulation, or are the councils happy with the regulations for fly-tipping and the ease with which they can prosecute?

I was very taken by what Mr. O’Leary said about the way the industry had changed. Does he believe a change in legislation is needed? Does he have any advice for the Legislature if,

as he says, we have moved from a largely council-led public waste collection service to a privatised system? Does the EPA have any view or are there particular suggestions as to how we might tighten the provisions in legislation to take account of the fundamental change that has occurred in recent years?

**Mr. Gerard O’Leary:** I am conscious of the time and will be quite happy to issue a written response to any question to which I do not give a clear answer.

Deputy Timmy Dooley used the phrase “drag on resources”. That is exactly what I am trying to convey. We regulate 200 waste activities and there are another 600 on the industrial side of things. Therefore, there are 800 regulated activities which are large. We have an inspectorate of 40. The phrase “in the light of the programme” was used. For me, another piece of work emerges in the light of the programme. We have a small staff who supervise the role of the local authorities. For the most part, all of the legislation on illegal dumping concerns local authorities. Whereas we do have a network with the local authorities, it is an area that could be strengthened. As I said, the establishment of lead local authorities is a positive step. I am not saying those involved in all of the 200 activities we regulate are non-compliant, but if we need to go through the court system to achieve compliance, it sucks up an awful lot of time. I call for increased resources to support the local authorities. We will need a multi-agency approach to achieve success in this area. The local authorities may call for the involvement of the EPA, but there is also a role for An Garda Síochána, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and, possibly, the Revenue Commissioners. The multi-agency approach needs to be further resourced.

**Deputy Timmy Dooley:** Who does Mr. O’Leary think should be driving it? When it comes to co-ordinating a multiplicity of State agencies, it is often the case that the issue falls between the cracks or stakeholders. Which should be the lead agency to co-ordinate the activities of all concerned? Should it be the EPA?

**Mr. Gerard O’Leary:** I would like to think we would be asked in the light of our track record in recent years on national priority sites, in taking cases through the courts and our investigative work. Five years ago there were 10,000 pieces of paper going back and forth between the EPA and licensees. The system is now electronic. It is something the European Union has acknowledged and would like to see in place in other jurisdictions. Therefore, I would like to think we would be asked to take a greater role in this area because of our track record.

Deputy Brian Stanley mentioned suspension and revocation. I was not pleased with the illegal activity I saw shown in the programme, but several barristers or legal academics talked about the challenges in implementing the legislation. There was a case in which we endeavoured to have a licence suspended. Frankly, we had been through the District Court and felt there was a need to suspend the licence. It is still within the courts system, but we believe we are going to have a resolution that will bring the concern involved back to compliance. However, as Deputy Timmy Dooley said, it is a big drag on resources, but it is not something that came about voluntarily. There is a cohort in the sector with whom we see similar tendencies.

On revocation, I would go as far as to say that we have gone to injunct facilities to close them down. For me it was the most non-compliant licensed activity that the EPA has licensed, it took us two attempts in the High Court to eventually close down the facility. I would like to think that the committee got a picture through the programme from the legal people who spoke on the challenges within the court system.

Deputy Stanley asked about the fines. For the District Court it is €5,000 or 12 months in prison or both. If a file is sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions, DPP, which we have done, it is up to €15 million or ten years in jail. We have had one major success. It was a huge file we sent to the DPP where a company was fined €20 million but that would be the exception rather than the norm.

On the administrative system and the split between permits and licences, I will ask my colleague about the threshold but it is something that has not been thought of in Ireland. It comes from the European directive that the larger activities would require a licence and that would attract things such as environmental impact statements and there would be greater rigour. For the smaller activities the permits would be the issue. It is amazing that on occasions I see that things just come in under the threshold on the activities because the permit was intended to be an easier route to get a licence. I say anecdotally that there can be a thin line on that.

**Ms Mary Gurrie:** I refer to Deputy Stanley's question about the threshold for licensing or permitting. I am afraid that there is no simple answer. All of the different types of waste activities have different thresholds for whether they need a certificate of registration, a permit or a licence and there is a complex decision tree available on our website which sets out all of the different categories. It is SI 86 of 2008 that sets it but as a rule of thumb, 50,000 tonnes of waste per annum is the threshold for a municipal, commercial, industrial waste type facility is the threshold per annum. Recovery requires a facility permit and the threshold is higher than that for more disposal or in the case of incinerators or landfills, EPA licensing is required. The threshold is roughly 50,000 tonnes therefore.

**Deputy Brian Stanley:** The reason I ask about that is I note that 2,000 waste collectors have been issued with permits. Are they typically under the 50,000 tonne threshold?

**Chairman:** Does Mr. Murray wish to come in on that point?

**Mr. Sean Murray:** I do. From the point of view of clarification, it is important to note that Offaly County Council has responsibility as the national waste collection permit office. That is the waste collection part of the issue. The issue the EPA was adverting to is the facility permit. The larger facilities cannot be permitted. They must be licensed by the EPA. The smaller facilities are permitted by each local authority. The figure of 2,010 refers to the collective, it is not the individual permits. They would include locally permitted facilities where a collection permit company would be bringing the waste to those facilities. I want to draw a distinction between the collection permit and the facility permit. We do not have a role on facility permits for any local authority other than ourselves.

**Chairman:** I thank Mr. Murray for that clarification. I call Mr. O'Leary.

**Mr. Gerard O'Leary:** To finish the point on Deputy Stanley's question about fines. They were displayed during the programme as amounting to €5,000 on average. One of the things that we find with District Court cases, where the maximum fine is €5,000, is that infrastructural commitments will be given through the courts. We have often found that the fine may only be a few thousand euro but the infrastructure that will be put in place during the court proceedings can be quite significant. The unfortunate thing is that the infrastructure is normally what is in the licence in the first instance so it is something that is required, which brings me back to my original point which is that we have to go through a courts system at times to put infrastructure in place that the companies were required to put in in the first instance.

**Chairman:** Does the witness have a final answer?

**Mr. Gerard O'Leary:** Yes.

**Chairman:** Very briefly, I am conscious of getting around.

**Mr. Gerard O'Leary:** In terms of tightening up the legislation, one of the relevant areas is that we send a number of files to the DPP. They are extensive files and they should be because the maximum fine is €15 million, but we have gone from a €20 million fine, which was two charges of €10 million to the other extreme of €25,000. I am not saying that both cases were identical but I would say that the gap between the two was not as big. If it was within the committee's gift there I would say that there should be clarity that if this offence is committed or the licences are breached then this is what the likely penalty is.

**Chairman:** I will bring in Mr. Neely and if there is time at the end I will bring other back in if they wish to clarify.

**Mr. Seamus Neely:** I thank Deputy Dooley for the question on what I have or have not said about the programme. The first thing I would say on the RTÉ programme is that I would welcome the concept. It has been very useful, we are having a conversation here today and we are able to share some of our experiences with the committee and we would not otherwise be doing that had the programme not been broadcast. I fully endorse the principle of highlighting that and the value of same.

What I did say is that I am not satisfied that the metric that they used to describe the performance of Donegal County Council was appropriate and I still stand over that. I look at the league table and I see a comparator county that has 25% less resources that is many places further up the league table and I cannot quite understand that. Of the three cases featured, one of those cases has been a very complex case where the council has prosecuted the individual and concerned parties on numerous occasions. There have been 13 successful prosecutions that have resulted in nine findings. That was not fully represented in the programme and it would have been useful had it been. Part of the difficulty we have in taking that as an example is that many of the fines that were imposed along the way were relatively small and not a sufficient deterrent.

On the resources, a decision was taken in 2017 to increase our resources significantly. At that point in time we considered that we needed more. That was as a consequence of being aware of particularly complex cases that were ongoing and being aware of how the new resource of the waste enforcement regional lead authority, WERLA, of which Donegal County Council is a lead partner, could be further enhanced by having more resources at local level. I am satisfied that the resource allocation we have now is much more appropriate to what we are facing.

There have been several incidents of an insidious and nasty nature as I referred to. Over a three-year period I recall approximately ten in number, that would have included individuals being approached, private property being damaged - including private homes and individuals being approached at social and community events. All of those were reported to the Garda. Unfortunately, sufficient evidence could not be gleaned to bring those through to a successful outcome but having spoken to the Garda and the people involved, I can understand that. Consequently, I am satisfied that sufficient attention was given to it by the authorities but nonetheless a successful outcome was not achieved. That is a significant issue but I am pleased to say that

the individuals who were impacted by that were not deterred from their work. They continued and perhaps it even tightened their resolve to ensure that what needed to be done was done.

One of the values of the programme for us was that we set up a help desk afterwards back at base and a number for people to call. We have had 35 calls to that number and those calls have come as a consequence of the programme. They relate to approximately 20 cases. The majority of those are cases that were already known to us or cases that were on the fly-tipping side of things. Nevertheless, there were a number within that which must be looked at more closely and might warrant further significant attention. There has been considerable value in that for us.

Deputy Eamon Ryan talked about the fly-tipping and one initiative that Donegal County Council does on an annual basis is to involve about 5,000 people across the county in 300 to 500 community clean ups. The engagement process there is very strong and there is a real understanding of and commitment not only to cleaning up but also to ensuring it does not happen again. Reference was made to the challenges faced and the cost of prosecuting littering fines. That is a challenge. Sometimes they are difficult cases on which to get a successful prosecution and the cost to public authorities is often multiples of the fine involved. If we are often unsuccessful in a prosecution, it sends a bad message also. That is one of the reasons we have moved to such an extent to the community side and working with them to have many thousands of enforcement officers across the county who can watch this on a daily basis.

One of the barometers I have watched on the performance of the organisation over the past period, apart from the publications of the EPA and others, is where we sit in relation to the number of complaints received. The rate of complaints received for Donegal in 2017 from the public was about 50% of the national average. While it is still too many complaints, it is a barometer of the performance. I appreciate that the more resources we can put into it, the better. I am satisfied that where we are now brings a good balance and that we will achieve good outcomes.

Deputy Stanley asked about the renewal of a facility permit. That facility permit was issued in 2013 and predated any of the prosecutions to which I have just referred. In fact, the facility is now completely closed and the subject of a court process. The facility operator is no longer allowed to operate and that includes the collection permits as well. In terms of what would make things better, the barrier at the moment for the public and enforcement authorities is that one has to meet a very strong burden to prove that an operator should not continue to have a licence. It should be the other way around and there should be an easier mechanism for enforcement authorities to say that, having taken a lot of things into consideration, an operator's licence will be revoked within two months unless the operator proves otherwise. The person should have the opportunity to go to court and protect it on the other side. The balance needs to be shifted in that respect. I appreciate that on occasion, the balance should be in favour of the citizen or operator but in this instance, it would work well the other way around for a period.

**Mr. Michael McGarvey:** The additional resources sought and secured in Donegal are very welcome, as the chief executive has just said. On the establishment of WERLAs, there is a problem. It is being addressed and this year is a very useful framework to work within. However, we work and report to the national waste enforcement steering committee. Deputy Dooley asked who actually led on that because sometimes one can fall between stools. It is co-ordinated and led by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. We meet on a quarterly basis. We have established national priorities including a multi-agency approach. At our last meeting, which took place in March this year, it was agreed with the other

## ILLEGAL DUMPING: DISCUSSION

agencies here to seek feedback from the regions as to how we might tighten and streamline the legislation. The multi-agency approach has been a very successful tool. We accept totally that there are problems but we believe it is the way forward. I refer back to when we had problems with road safety and how we talked about compliance. That is the point we will reach. It will not just be a question of enforcement, rather we will have compliance. I am convinced the multi-agency approach is the way forward in that regard.

**Mr. Seamus Neely:** Deputy Stanley asked a question about the mounds. I was appalled like others when watching the programme. I was not surprised when I saw a couple of the sites mentioned because I was aware of them. However, I was not aware of those mounds. It was a very strong signal to me that there was something terribly wrong on that site. Those mounds have all been levelled and excavated under the direction of the local authority in the last week or ten days. They were all under 2 m in height and all of them, bar one, contained little or no material other than shale, rock and soil. The one that had materials in it was the one featured on the programme.

**Deputy Brian Stanley:** It clearly should not be there. It was illegal dumping and it was criminal activity.

**Mr. Seamus Neely:** It would be a strong statement for me to agree with that. The materials that were in it were materials that were consistent with-----

**Deputy Brian Stanley:** The site is not a waste disposal site. It is a protected area.

**Mr. Seamus Neely:** It is not a waste disposal site but it is the undisturbed ground above a quarry. The mounds in question were made up of material that was consistent with being stripped back.

**Deputy Brian Stanley:** The area is a protected one.

**Chairman:** I want to bring in Mr. Murray. I am conscious of time.

**Deputy Brian Stanley:** I asked another question. We have people from the local authorities and the EPA in the same room.

**Chairman:** I am just conscious that one speaker has not come in and there are only five minutes left.

**Deputy Brian Stanley:** I asked about by-laws for household collection.

**Chairman:** Mr. Murray is going to come in on that. I am conscious that he has not come in at all.

**Mr. Sean Murray:** I have five points to make. Senator Leyden asked if Offaly was fit for purpose as the national waste collection office. The simple answer is that our view is that it is. We have ISO 9001 supporting that. Historically, collection permits were issued on a regional basis. That was in the first ten years of their existence. Offaly was the regional authority for the midlands region at the time. Those regional licences were in fact supra-regional anyway because they were semi-national licences. From 2001 to 2012, Offaly was the waste collection permit office for the midlands region. We became the national waste collection permit office, NWCPO, after that and we believe we are fit for purpose. As the NWCPO, we are clearly aware of the extent of our authority, the limit of our authority and our area of competence as they are all clearly prescribed and defined by law and regulation, which we apply. I can adduce for the

attention of the committee at any stage the area on which we base our competent decisions.

Deputy Stanley asked how we assessed technical knowledge. We have a complex way to assess technical knowledge, but in simple terms an applicant has to demonstrate possession of a BSc in environmental science, a masters degree in environmental science, a certificate from a waste collection training programme and so on. We have a very rigorous examination of the technical qualifications of anyone who comes to us as a permit applicant.

I refer to the next question in general terms as this is going through the process in all local authorities, not just Offaly. By-laws for the separate waste collection processes are going through local authorities across the State at the moment. I am sure Mr. Neely will confirm that in the case of Donegal. We have initiated the by-law process, which is a legal process to be taken step by step. Among other things, it will include a requirement to provide evidence of how waste will be disposed of. That has been dealt with adequately.

Deputy Eamon Ryan talked about fly-tipping and whether prosecutions in that regard were cost effective. The simple answer is that they are not. Prosecutions cost us money. Notwithstanding that, I confirm that Offaly County Council prosecutes without exception in all cases of breaches of waste legislation where we can produce and adduce proof to the appropriate authority.

Finally, I make a general comment on the following without going into any detail due to the fact that a case is before the High Court. I will make no reference to it except to note that it is not very complex. I support what Mr. O'Leary said on behalf of the EPA and what Mr. Neely said on behalf of Donegal. We have already had three full days of hearing in the High Court but we are not finished. That is what is required when we get into court. It is a complex arena and prosecutions are difficult to effect.

**Mr. Sean Scott:** I know time is limited. The WERLA office has been mentioned quite a bit. We produced a 2017 annual report, which outlines our activities and we can circulate it to the committee if necessary. While our role is to co-ordinate a consistent approach to enforcement, local authorities remain the boots on the ground in that regard. We support that. Where local authorities have asked us for assistance, we have provided it. There is clear evidence of that across the country. As my colleague, Mr. McGarvey says, our work is co-ordinated through the national waste enforcement steering committee. We have great support in the Connacht-Ulster region from Donegal and Leitrim county councils as the consortium leading the WERLA locally.

The RTÉ programme mentioned the number of permits. However, local authorities nationally deal with 60,000 waste and litter complaints, 1,000 permits, approximately 2,000 waste collection permits and producer-responsibility initiatives. Deputy Ryan mentioned dumping. We recognise this as an issue and we sought funding from the Department in 2017, which resulted in €1.8 million being allocated for anti-dumping initiatives. There are 190 projects nationally and there have been good outcomes with a good buy-in from communities. We encourage local authorities to look at innovations such as mobile workforce applications. There has been another €2 million this year to repeat the initiatives. It will build on the work Donegal and other local authorities across the country are doing in their local communities

**Chairman:** I thank Mr. Scott for keeping it brief. I believe members got their answers but if there is anything he would like to add, he should feel free to put it in writing. I thank everybody for coming to what was a worthwhile engagement. The committee will issue a press release on

ILLEGAL DUMPING: DISCUSSION

litter on beaches and in public parks over the summer months.

The joint committee adjourned at 3 p.m. *sine die*.