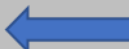

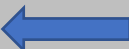


## 2023 National Enforcement Priorities Progress Report

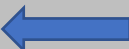
National Enforcement Priority: <b>GOVERNANCE - RMCEI Review &amp; Reporting</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting through the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</b></p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RMCEI Plan frequency of reviews should be bi-annual at a minimum. The review frequency and the outcomes should be included in the progress report.</li> <li>RMCEI reviews should evaluate progress of NEPs and assess if planned inspection targets are on track.</li> <li>RMCEI reviews should provide reasons for any deviation from targets, planned activities or objectives set out in the plan.</li> <li>RMCEI reviews should be presented to the Director of Services/Senior Engineer/Senior Management/Environment Strategic Policy Committee at least once during the earlier part of the year, to facilitate plan review.</li> <li>The RMCEI Plan, RMCEI Data Return and NEP Progress Report should be submitted to the EPA on schedule.</li> </ul>	<p>The delivery of the RMCEI Plan is identified as one of the core priorities in the Environment PMDS Team Plan as agreed with Senior Management in January 2023. The responsibility for the elements of the RMCEI Plan were incorporated into the individual Team members PDPs and these were assigned performance indicators and targets. The actual performance relative to these targets within the PDPs were reviewed mid-year and again at end of year.</p> <p>The RMCEI Plan was included as an item for formal discussion on the formal Quarterly Team meetings attended by the Senior Engineer and Director of Services. Discussions on issues arising are documented in the minutes of these meetings. These minutes are circulated to all attendees.</p> <p>A detailed presentation was given to the Environment Strategic Policy Committee and media at its formal meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The purpose of this presentation was to explain the context of the National Enforcement Priorities and the associated targets as incorporated in the RMCEI Plan for this authority. Performance by Westmeath County Council against these targets was demonstrated and the SPC members engaged in detailed question and answer session. These discussions were recorded in the formal minutes and approved by SPC before being circulated to all Council members.</p>

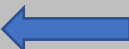
National Enforcement Priority: <b>GOVERNANCE - Environmental Complaint Handling</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 <b>Looking back at the year</b>	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting through the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</b></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment of a dedicated Environmental Complaints Co-ordinator.</li> <li>• Implementation of the National Environmental Complaints Procedure.</li> <li>• Appropriate systems in place for recording and tracking environmental complaints.</li> <li>• Adequate resources assigned to complaint investigation in the RMCEI Plan.</li> <li>• Appropriate handling of EPA referred complaints and Section 63 Notices received by the local authority.</li> <li>• Ensuring timely investigation of complaints and reporting of complaints outcomes. This should include progress on complaints outstanding from previous years, the complaint investigation rate and the timeframes for complaint investigation.</li> <li>• Analysis of complaints numbers and inspection intelligence that may have potential impacts on NEPs and other thematic areas.</li> <li>• Details of environmental complaint handling should be provided in the appropriate section of the NEP Progress Report.</li> <li>• Reporting of complaint numbers and investigation for each thematic area in the RMCEI Data Returns.</li> </ul>	<p>The SEE Environment is the dedicated Environmental Complaints Coordinator.</p> <p>Environmental complaints were received in many formats including front desk, phone, correspondence and other mainstream media, social media, this Council's on-line complaint portal, CCMS system, EPA portal, public representative communications, cross-departmental observation, own staff monitoring, other regulatory body communications etc. Regardless of source, these complaints were managed by Westmeath County Council using an Environmental Complaints System which was a bespoke database management system developed by the in-house IT Team to meet the requirements of this authority. The system is secure and allows complaint details to be recorded, sorted and tracked. All complaints received and recorded by the frontline staff, were subsequently triaged by the SEE Environment and assigned a priority rating as well as a designated authorised officer to investigate. The system allowed for action dates to be assigned. The reporting tool within the system allows a series of monitoring progress reports to be generated. These reports were used at the formal quarterly Environment Team Meetings.</p> <p>In 2023, 763 environmental complaints were logged on the system. Each of these complaints were categorised under dropdown headings and subheadings. This categorisation allowed prioritisation by the SEE in alignment with the priorities and thematic areas identified in the 2023 National Environmental Priorities.</p> <p>Westmeath County Council received 8 no Section 63 Notices on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 seeking information in respect of the planning status and associated details including planning enforcement policy, relating to commercial peat extraction at 8 different locations within the county. All the requested information requested was duly returned to the EPA within the deadline - 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023.</p>


NEP Assessment Criteria		
<b>A</b>	For regulated / authorised sites, a <b>compliance rate</b> documented and compared over the previous years, and analysed or explained;	CORE
<b>B</b>	Demonstrate <b>appropriate site selection</b> methodology and inspection implementation and/or early interventions;	
<b>C</b>	Demonstration <b>that non-compliances/unauthorised activities are being detected</b> and are being followed up – and some progress in the NEP is shown;	
<b>D</b>	Clear example(s) of a positive <b>environmental outcome(s)</b> – something was achieved to improve the environment (not simply reached a target of inspections);	
<b>E</b>	Clear <b>useful learning in a NEP area</b> (positive or negative e.g. what to do, or what not to do, or identification of illegal sites or unauthorised operators);	Complementary
<b>F</b>	<b>Collaborative work</b> with WERLA, NTFSO, RWMPO, LAWPRO, EPA, Catchment Care Projects, inter-departmental within the local authority or with other local authorities; cross cutting NEP collaboration;	
<b>G</b>	Demonstration of a <b>proactive approach</b> , or <b>innovation</b> in dealing with a problem or demonstration of an <b>enforcement curiosity</b> ;	
<b>H</b>	<b>Compliance promotion and awareness</b> raising activities;	
<b>I</b>	Activities on <b>data validation, data analysis, systems development, website development</b> ;	
<b>J</b>	<b>Significant enforcement actions/prosecutions</b> and the outcomes such as remediation, sharing of lessons learnt to aid national consistency of enforcement;	
<b>K</b>	<b>Case studies written up and shared</b> that encompass any of the above properties.	

National Enforcement Priority: <b>WATER – Pressures from Agriculture (Farm Yards) - slurry/soiled water collection and storage</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 <b>Looking back at the year</b>	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting though the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</b></p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b><u>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspections of farmyards in areas where agriculture is identified as a significant pressure, with a small percentage in other areas, as defined in the National Agriculture Inspection Programme for local authorities.</li> <li>• Undertake targeted agricultural inspections specific to the pollutants of concerns (P, N and organics), using the EPA Pollution Impact Potential (PIP) maps and EPAs Targeting Agriculture Measures map.</li> <li>• Take all necessary steps to ensure compliance, including follow up and close out of non-compliances.</li> <li>• Cross reporting of non-compliances to DAFM.</li> <li>• Document and report results for all farm inspections to the EPA.</li> </ul>	<p>Two farms were investigated this year under this priority, one in relation to inadequate soiled water collection and one in relation to inadequate slurry storage facilities. The farm surveys were carried out on foot of pollution complaints in both cases.</p> <p><u>Inadequate Soiled Water Collection- Farm No. 1</u></p> <p>This dairy farm is located within the proposed extended Derravaragh Priority Area of Action (PAA) as per Draft River Basin Management Plan. Alleged water pollution arising from this farm was reported to Westmeath Co Co through a referral from Fisheries Ireland. The FI inspector had become aware of a polluted stream leading from the yard, had engaged with the farmer but was not satisfied that the stream was showing any improvement even after some measures were put in place. Hence, the decision to refer it onwards to Westmeath Co Co. The polluted stream is a small tributary which flows into the River Inny, identified as under pressure due to agriculture. A farm inspection was carried out, dye testing completed to trace drainage on the farmyard and samples taken of the polluted stream. Water chemistry results indicated pollution. The farmer requested advice from an ASSAP advisor and employed an Agricultural Consultant. WCC issued a pre S12 letter requesting agreed measures be put in place and carried out. Measures included the improved management of dairy washings and their collection. All measures outlined were carried out by the farmer to the satisfaction of WCC. A follow-up inspection later in the year indicated that the stream was no longer polluted. The farmer is currently in the process of seeking planning permission for improved effluent facilities on the farmyard.</p>

	<p><u>Inadequate Slurry Storage Facilities- Farm No. 2</u></p> <p>A dairy farm located in close proximity to the River Shannon was found to have significant inadequate slurry storage in place upon investigation of a pollution complaint by WCC. Slurry from a dirty yard was discharging directly into a drain leading to a tributary that flows into the Shannon Callows SPA and SAC. A S12 notice was issued to the farmer requiring him to cease discharge with immediate effect and to carry out works. The farmer complied with the S12 notice and a reinspection was carried out by WCC staff. A review of this file regarding cross reporting is underway. The farmer is currently in the process of seeking planning permission for improved effluent facilities on the farmyard.</p> <p>Due to insufficient staff resources, WCC Environment staff were unable to carry out the 8 NAIP inspections required in 2023. Similarly, no follow up inspections of farms previously inspected under the GAP Regulations were possible in 2023.</p>
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National Enforcement Priority: <b>WATER – Pressures from Agriculture (Farmland) - slurry and fertiliser spreading</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 <b>Looking back at the year</b>	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting though the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</b></p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the <u>previous reporting year</u> – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspections of farmlands in areas where agriculture is identified as a significant pressure, with a small percentage in other areas as defined in the National Agriculture Inspection Programme for local authorities.</li> <li>• Undertake targeted agricultural inspections specific to the pollutants of concerns (P, N and organics), using the EPA Pollution Impact Potential (PIP) maps and EPAs Targeting Agriculture Measures map.</li> <li>• Take all necessary steps to ensure compliance, including follow up and close out of non-compliances.</li> <li>• Cross reporting of non-compliances to DAFM.</li> <li>• Document and report results for all farm inspections to the EPA.</li> </ul>	<p>The same farm investigated above (Farm No. 1) for inadequate soiled water collection was also found to have pressures from slurry spreading. ASSAP advised that some spreadlands bordering the polluted drain had a high risk of Phosphorus runoff and outlined measures to adhere to such as maintaining an increased buffer zone and restricting application times to times of active growth when spreading fertiliser. Other measures advised were to prepare a nutrient management plan when soil samples were taken and to avoid critical source areas in the fields that are prone to waterlogging. This information will prove very useful to the farmer to lower the risk of water pollution during the future management of the spreadlands.</p> <p>Slurry/fertiliser complaints are one of the most common categories of agricultural complaints received by Westmeath County Council. Once the complaint is received on the Environmental Complaints System, it is triaged by the Senior Executive Engineer in Environment and assigned a priority. In all cases, a warning letter is sent to the landowner and depending on the potential environmental risk, a site inspection is carried out.</p> <p>WCC assessed 19 Nutrient Management Plans in 2023 for the application of biosolids and approved 18. During the year 2 complaints were received regarding the spreading of biosolids and these were investigated and closed out. The approval process for NMPs for receipt of biosolids will continue to be informed by the complaints history (if any) associated with those spreadlands.</p> <p>Due to insufficient staff resources, WCC Environment staff were unable to carry out the 8 NAIP inspections required in 2023. No follow up inspections of farms previously inspected under the GAP Regulations were possible in 2023.</p>

National Enforcement Priority: <b>WATER – Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems / Septic Tanks</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting through the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</b></p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake the allocated number of DWWTS/Septic Tanks inspections under the National Inspection Plan.</li> <li>• Take all necessary steps to follow up and ensure advisory notices are closed out.</li> <li>• When selecting households for inspection, consider areas where LAWPRO have issued letters of grant eligibility and homeowners have not taken action.</li> </ul>	<p>Westmeath County Council were tasked to carry out 7 septic tank inspections in 2023 as per The National Inspection Plan 2022-2026. Sites were selected using the EPA's Risk Zone Maps.</p> <p>Land registry and Eircode Finder were used to determine the correct contact details for homeowners. Appointment letters were sent giving a at least 10 days' notice. Information leaflets were enclosed with the letters on what to expect from the inspection and on general maintenance of septic tanks/systems. Homeowners were advised that failure to show evidence of desludging within the last 2 years would automatically result in a failed septic tank inspection. Westmeath County Council has found that this approach of advising regarding desludging allows the householder the opportunity to be proactive about the inspection, increases the likelihood of achieving compliance and leads to a more positive interaction with the inspectors on the day. It effectively reduces non-compliances from lack of desludging.</p> <p>2 inspections carried out in Zone 3 (Lower relative risk to surface waters). Both septic tank inspections failed to comply due to failure of the treatment system components resulting in a 0% compliance rate. This would appear to compare unfavourably to an 85 % compliance rate in 2022. It should be noted that 7 septic tank inspections were carried out in 2022. Due to the loss of 2 registered septic tank inspectors from the Env. section staff compliment during the year, the remaining 5 septic tank inspections due to be carried out in 2023 were deferred until 2024.</p> <p>In addition to the 2 initial inspections, 2 verification inspections were carried out on an older open Advisory Notices from 2021. Compliance was achieved for both householders through the installation of new treatment systems and percolation areas in both cases. Both Advisory Notices were closed out.</p> <p>There were no LAWPRO referrals in 2023.</p>

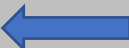
National Enforcement Priority: <b>WATER – Discharge Licences / Misconnections</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting through the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</b></p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b><u>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all licence conditions are consistent with the requirements of the Surface Waters and Groundwater regulations.</li> <li>• Undertake risk based inspections/monitoring of Section 4 licences. Inspect all licences in areas where discharge licensing is a significant pressure.</li> <li>• Ensure that all licensable discharges are authorised by a Section 4 licence.</li> <li>• Ensure compliance with discharge licence conditions and follow up and close out non-compliances and LAWPRO referrals on Section 4s and misconnections.</li> <li>• Follow up on misconnections that have been identified as impacting on water quality to ensure that works are undertaken by property owners to remediate such misconnections.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Discharge Licences:</u></b></p> <p>The Risk Rating Tool was used to determine the number and priority of inspections to be carried out by the Council in 2023. There are currently 27 discharge licenced sites in the county. No new Section 4 Discharge Licences were issued in 2023. The compliance rate for S4 licences in 2023 was 11%.</p> <p>Westmeath County Council had a target of undertaking 25 Section 4 Discharge Licence inspections during 2023. A total of 15 inspections were carried out.</p> <p>Investigations indicated that, in general, non-compliances for licensees were for exceedances in one, or a number of parameters tested for in their effluent discharge. When exceedances were noted, the Council formally wrote out to the licence holder and instructed certain follow up measures to be undertaken. Follow up measures included; treatment plant servicing / de-sludging, re-sampling and re-testing. Further monitoring of results was undertaken when required.</p> <p>Westmeath County Council have identified 21 of non-compliant licence holders during the course of the year (mainly failure to adhere to sampling programme or non-payment of fees) and warning letters have been served on these, with follow up inspections scheduled for 2024. In 2023, staff resources limited the Council's ability to progress further with inspections of discharge licensed sites and to progress with the licensing of any new licensable discharges.</p> <p>Separately, WCC identified an unauthorised trade effluent arising from a pub that was no longer licensed under a Section 4 discharge licence, as had previously been the case. The effluent was not being treated in a sufficient manner by the wastewater treatment system in situ and proved a high risk to a nearby public drinking water source and recreation amenity due to its proximity. After inspection of the site and confirmation of the alleged pollution, a S12 WPA notice was issued to the owner. Subsequently the treatment plant was upgraded and the</p>



pollution abated. The investigation remains open while the property owner regularises the situation by completing the application process for a new S4 licence. The application process will continue into 2024

**Misconnections:**

A misconnection investigation arising from discharges to surface water, was undertaken which subsequently identified a storm water overflow (SWO) in operation Mullingar network. This was brought to the attention of WCC and LAWPRO staff during a joint investigation into another pollution issue. Samples of the receiving surface waterbody were taken with results indicating elevated nutrients. The receiving waterbody flows into a proposed PAA (under the 3<sup>rd</sup> Draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland) which is an important habitat for the conservation of brown trout and an important recreation amenity among other things. The timing of the sampling proved serendipitous as the storm water overflow had been triggered due to a high rainfall event the day before sampling. A report was issued to Uisce Eireann (UE), who are responsible for the SWO, by LAWPRO with the agreement of WCC. UE have acknowledged the need to address this deficiency and WCC currently await an update on timeline from UE.

National Enforcement Priority: <b>WATER – Local Priorities and Water Quality Monitoring</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting through the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</b></p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b><u>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete statutory monitoring for WFD surveillance and operational monitoring, investigative monitoring and bathing water monitoring.</li> <li>• Inspect and follow up any local issues (not covered by other NEPs), including non-compliances with water quality standards and LAWPRO referrals.</li> <li>• Address any climate related water quality issues e.g. impacts due to extreme weather events</li> <li>• Monitoring and enforcement of private drinking water supplies.</li> <li>• Engage with LAWPRO and Regional Committees on the implementation of the RBMP Actions.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>WFD Monitoring:</u></b></p> <p>Under the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland, sets out the actions that Ireland will take to improve water quality and achieve “good” ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes and groundwater) by 2027. During 2023, 239 river and lake samples were taken by Westmeath County Council under the WFD Sampling Programme. The river samples comprised of 25 operational monitoring sites which is an increase of 10 operational river sites from 2022 and 2 surveillance monitoring sites which remained the same as 2022. The lake samples comprised of 15 operational monitoring sites and 11 surveillance monitoring sites. WCC Environmental Technicians carried out the river sampling and lake sampling was carried out by an external Consultant. A small number of lake samples were also taken by a neighbouring local authority due to their closer proximity to the sites involved. Monthly river and lake samples were sent to Kilkenny EPA lab for analysis. PFAS samples were taken in 2023 for 4 river sampling points and 2 lake sampling points. 3 of the 4 river sampling points are on the Brosna and 1 of the lake sampling points is Lough Owel. These were included in the programme as a result of investigative PFAS monitoring carried out by the EPA in 2021/2022. See below for further details on PFAS investigative monitoring.</p> <p><b><u>Investigative Monitoring:</u></b></p> <p>Under the WFD monitoring programme, the River Brosna and Lough Owel had increased levels of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) detections when compared to other areas monitored across Ireland, particularly for Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). PFAS are known as “forever chemicals” which persist in the environment and are known to have harmful effects on human and animal health. In 2023, the EPA sent a draft of the EPA Study “PFAS Monitoring Survey - Study of Selected Sites on the River Brosna and River Shannon 2021–2022” to WCC for comment. The report indicated that there may be a potential hotspot of PFOA in the Upper Brosna River. Due to this, WCC met with the EPA and agreed to add an extra river monitoring point at</p>

the river Brosna near Mullingar for PFAS sampling under the WFD monitoring programme. 2 river sites on the Brosna were already scheduled for PFAS monitoring in 2023. However it was decided to also add in another Brosna sampling point for PFAS where the Brosna leaves Lough Owel and before it navigates through Mullingar town.

In addition, in collaboration with LAWPRO, investigative monitoring was undertaken by WCC in Nov. 2023 at 17 locations along the storm and sewer network of Mullingar town. On the same date, LAWPRO undertook investigative sampling at 13 river locations along the Brosna River from Lough Owel outflow to the inflow to Lough Ennell. Initial findings from the network investigative monitoring have yielded a potential hotspot in a particular part of the sewer network in Mullingar. The highest PFOA results along the River Brosna were downstream of an industrial park and in the main channel of the Brosna as it nears the point of entry into Lough Ennell. After engaging with the EPA post sampling, the data obtained from the investigation was shared with the Persistent Organics Pollutants team there. The data is currently under review by the EPA and WCC will be carrying out further investigations of the hotspot on the sewer network. It is probable that PFAS detections are historic in nature and are not occurring at present.

#### **Bathing Water Monitoring:**

During the 2023 bathing water season, WCC carried out fortnightly monitoring of the 3 designated bathing areas within the county. These bathing areas are located at The Cut on Lough Lene, Portnashangan on Lough Owel and Lilliput on Lough Ennell. The latest annual water quality rating applied to The Cut and Portnashangan was “Excellent” for 2023. The latest annual water quality rating applied to Lilliput was “Good” for 2023. During 2023, 56 bathing water samples were taken between the 3 bathing areas.

Prior to the commencement of the 2023 bathing season, WCC carried out measures to decrease the likelihood of contamination of the Lilliput bathing area. The package wastewater treatment plant serving the Adventure Centre at Lilliput was turned off and the nearby domestic septic tank was de-sludged. These measures were carried out to eliminate any possibility of contamination from these sources. During the bathing season, the package WWTP acted as a holding tank and wastewater was removed and tankered away on a daily basis by the Council. In consultation with LAWPRO/ASSAP, farmers within the immediate catchment were advised re landspreading of fertilisers to minimize risk to water quality, particularly during the bathing season.

As per previous years, investigative sampling was carried out alongside compliance sampling during the season at Lilliput. Investigative sampling involved the additional monitoring upstream and downstream of the bathing area and monitoring of the feeder stream into the bathing area, namely Dysart stream. This sampling continued as per previous years in order to have a more complete and robust data set in case of any deterioration in water quality. Fortunately, there were no exceedances of E.Coli or Intestinal Enterococci at any of the 3 bathing areas

	<p>during the 2023 season. This was an improvement on 2022 where there were bacterial exceedances at Lilliput from mid -June 2022 to early July. This shows further improvement in the management of Lilliput bathing area and is a great success considering that Lilliput was in danger of being delisted as a bathing water only a few years ago.</p> <p>The short-term pollution (STP) warning system was employed at Lilliput again in 2023. This was agreed upon with the EPA in order to increase the opportunities to resample the bathing water, hence improving the chance of a higher water quality classification. The type of pollution that has historically led to exceedances at Lilliput is diffuse agricultural pollution where high rainfall is a factor, particularly if organic fertiliser has been spread in the previous few days. During 2023, there were 6 STP warnings put in place at Lilliput to warn bathers of the possibility of contamination due to forecasted increased levels of rainfall. During these incidents, a prior warning notice was erected on site, the HSE notified and WCC social media accounts were updated of same.</p> <p>As per previous years, WCC engaged with LAWPRO and ASSAP throughout the bathing water season. Results were communicated to LAWPRO as soon as they were available and when heavy rainfalls were forecast (yellow warning or higher), ASSAP communicated to farmers whose lands were in highly sensitive areas to advise to refrain from landspreading at those times.</p> <p><u>Private Water Supplies:</u></p> <p>Throughout 2023, Westmeath County Council continued to work on drinking water standards in collaboration with the EPA, HSE, National Federation of Group Water Schemes, Stakeholders, INAB Laboratory Contractor, Irish Water and the Department of Housing, Local Government &amp; Heritage (DHLGH).</p> <p>In particular, the Council continued to manage the bi-annual monitoring programme in respect of small private supplies (SPS) with HSE Officers conducting the sampling. Also, the Council is currently in the process of updating the data within both its small private supply and group water scheme registers in compliance with the EU (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bi-annual sampling was conducted on 50 nr. private water supplies (37 SPS &amp; 13 Group Water Schemes) under the Drinking Water Regulations. (no change from 2022)</li> <li>• 4 nr. samples and an audit were conducted on 1 nr. private group water scheme as more than 100m3 of water is produced per day in accordance with the Regulations</li> <li>• Water quality results were uploaded to the EPA's EDEN portal</li> <li>• The Council consulted with the HSE regarding public health implications of any parametric failures. Following this consultation, 1 nr. boil water notice was issued to a group water scheme and 6 nr boil water notices were issued to small private supplies.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 nr. domestic well grant applications received during 2023 were approved either for the installation of new wells, well rehabilitation works or well treatment units (administered domestic well grant scheme on behalf of the DHLGH)</li> <li>• 35 well grants were paid to applicants last year, this was 4 more than during 2022</li> </ul> <p>Of the 105 private water supplies monitoring samples taken, 7 were identified as having exceedance in respect of bacterial parameters warranting the issue of 7 Boil Water Notices. The exceedances may be attributed to the particularly poor weather conditions encountered during the autumn sampling round. 6 of those 7 Boil Notices remain in place, leaving a total of 8 boil water notices at the end of in 2023. Overall, monitoring results would indicate 92% compliance in 2023 which is lower than the 98% compliance rate recorded in 2022.</p>
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National Enforcement Priority: <b>WASTE - Tackling illegal waste activities &amp; Multi-Agency Sites/Operators of Concern</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting though the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'. Note that Criteria A (to provide a compliance rate and comparison with previous years) is not specifically applicable under this NEP. The activity reported under the following RMCEI data categories should be considered under this NEP: 6.1.2, 6.1.5, 6.2.1 - 6.2.6, 6.2.11.</p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted inspections and follow up enforcement actions of unauthorised collectors and site operators using intelligence from waste data flows, complaints and other available data.</li> <li>Co-ordination with, and input from Revenue/Social Protection/An Garda Síochána in relation to unauthorised activity and identified sites/operators of concern in line with the Garda Multi-Agency forums.</li> <li>Multi-agency investigations for sites/operators of concern.</li> <li>Roadside check points.</li> <li>Relevant Anti-Dumping Initiatives implemented.</li> <li>Traceability requirements to be enforced at Permitted/Licensed sites.</li> <li>Focus on those who are facilitating the unauthorised treatment of waste.</li> <li>Create an active list or register of unauthorised sites/operators.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Illegal Waste Activity</u></b></p> <p>In December 2023 Westmeath has 23 authorised waste facilities and 44 authorised waste collectors based in the county. Of these 23 Authorised facilities, 7 of these are Authorised Treatment Facilities.</p> <p>In conjunction with WERLA and the Waste Management Planning Office there were several site visits to a large scale Authorised Treatment facility. The facility was identified by WERLA as one of the top 10 WFP/ATFs in the region which should be considered for Audit.</p> <p>The first of these site visits was a site audit which took place in May 2023 with Westmeath Co Co EWO's in collaboration with WERLA. This site visit was in relation to inaccuracies in data &amp; record keeping from the 2021 Annual Returns data and Waste Register. Upon request, documents were made available by the Waste Facility Site and after review of these documents both Westmeath Co Co EWO's and WERLA were not satisfied with the responses and documents received. The audit results were marked as inconclusive.</p> <p>A further audit was carried out onsite in July 2023 with the Waste Management Planning Office in order to review discrepancies in the previous year's 2022 annual returns particularly concerning data recorded by the permit holder in question, but no corresponding entry recorded on the opposing permit holder data return. The This audit also highlighted significant shortcomings in the facility's waste recording systems.</p> <p>The above audit initiated a further review of the Waste Register documents, this time for a more recent period of Quarter 1 of 2023.</p>

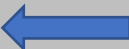
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Authorities to keep the Convictions Register up to date.</li> </ul>	<p>The concerns in relation to this site were in relation to the holding of a waste register on site and the Identification of inaccuracies in reporting/recording – tonnages, names of incoming waste and also inaccuracies in the way the site operator was operating the car take back scheme.</p> <p>In addition, further concern with this facility relates to the acceptance of waste material from unauthorised waste collectors.</p> <p>The investigation remains ongoing with further follow up multi-agency inspections planned in 2024.</p> <p>Another Multi Agency inspection was carried out at a waste transfer station in Westmeath. The aim of this inspection focused on the movement of Waste code 17 05 04 (Soil &amp; Stone) moving from one waste facility permit site to another waste facility permit site or Cert of Registration Site. The concern related to the about the quality and quantity of this 17 05 04 soil &amp; stone material accepted &amp; generated on these permitted sites and its suitability for acceptance into Class 6 soil recovery sites. On the day of this inspection it was found that there was a very small amount of this material on site and a full assessment was not viable. Further follow up on this premises will be carried out in Q1 2024 with the Waste planning office.</p> <p>Currently there is one known significant unauthorised facility with a large stockpiles of waste tyres which had been identified in previous years and the operator was successfully prosecuted. However, it would appear that this site operator is continuing to collect waste tyres and additionally it appears that this site is operating as unauthorised waste facility site with a large quantity of what appears to be soil &amp; stone and other waste material on site.</p> <p>The investigation remains open and legal advice is awaited on the options for further enforcement actions during 2024.</p> <p>Numerous Anti-Dumping Initiatives were implemented by Westmeath Co Co in 2023. These included the erection of two minute litter picking board scheme. 5 mobile litter picking boards were placed at various locations around Westmeath and members of the public are welcomed to take a picker and take part in a litter pick while out in their local areas.</p> <p>Solar bins were installed in parts of Westmeath as part of a pilot scheme. Solar bins allow the bins to compact and store more waste meaning they are more effective than standard outdoor bins.</p> <p>Westmeath Co Co also implemented a GAA reusable plastic bottle project. Westmeath Co Co supplied 2300 reusable bottles to local GAA clubs with an aim to reducing single use plastics. Feedback &amp; consultation with the GAA clubs was that the project was a massive success, with all clubs involved noting a huge decrease in</p>
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	single use plastic bottles on their club grounds. Many other sports clubs in the county have since contacted Westmeath Co Co to see if the single use plastic bottle project could be rolled out in their clubs in 2024.
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National Enforcement Priority: <b>WASTE - Construction and Demolition Activity</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting though the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'. The activity reported under the following RMCEI data categories should be considered under this NEP: 6.1.1-6.1.4 (C&amp;D waste facilities), 6.1.7, 6.1.12 (C&amp;D waste collectors), 6.2.10.</b></p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b><u>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk based inspections of construction sites using WERLA intelligence and inspection templates.</li> <li>• Inspection of Article 27 sites of origin and destination to include material notified under Article 27 being accepted at WFP/Licensed sites.</li> <li>• Inspection of soil recovery sites to ensure only appropriate materials accepted.</li> <li>• Validation and inspection of WCP/WFP and licensed sites dealing with C&amp;D waste.</li> <li>• Take all necessary steps to resolve non-compliant issues including the selling of crushed concrete from WFPs/Licensed sites without EoW decision.</li> <li>• Tracking of waste delivered to Licensed sites.</li> <li>• Based on researched data and local knowledge, identify authorised operators for further investigation and/or enforcement action.</li> <li>• Focused monitoring of the resources and systems available for gathering and reporting waste data to be carried out as part of site audits at waste facilities/waste collectors.</li> </ul>	<p>Westmeath because of it's proximity and accessibility from Dublin has experienced an increase in the demand for authorised waste facilities with a capacity to accept construction and demolition waste. This demand has manifested itself in increased number of waste facility / certificate of registration applications as well as reports of unauthorised waste activities which require investigation.</p> <p>Westmeath County Council carried out the planned inspections of these authorised waste facilities as set out in the risk assessment matrix attached to the 2023 RMCEI Plan.</p> <p>There are currently 10 Waste Facility Sites and 6 Cert of Registrations sites in Westmeath which are primarily used for the disposal of Soil &amp; Stone material. Of these Waste facility Sites there was only one new registered site in 2023.</p> <p>4 of the 6 COR site associated with Westmeath are sites that are registered to GAA Clubs. In recent years the GAA has provided central funding for the development of playing facilities, and many large waste hauliers operating in the Dublin area have "partnered" with rural GAA clubs to accept C&amp;D waste to build up and expand their grounds. These sites appear to be near completion, and it is expected that in 2024 these Cert of Registration sites will be surrendered by the permit holders.</p> <p>One waste facility permit site was investigated in 2023 following intelligence received that the site operator had brought in excess tonnage and unauthorised C&amp;D material. Westmeath Co Co WEO's investigated this site and it was found that C&amp;D material had been disposed of on the site and further desktop and field surveys also noted that there was an exceedance of material disposed of on the site.</p>


	<p>A section 14 notice was issued in March 2023 directing the permit to cease the acceptance of waste material on this site. A further Section 14 notice was issued in November 2023 requesting the permit holder to carry out an Environmental Risk Assessment (ERA). Westmeath Co Co are awaiting this ERA and further enforcement action may be considered. The investigation remains ongoing with further follow up planned in 2024.</p> <p>One Certificate of Registration site failed to submit annual returns for the previous three years and they also failed to make annual payments. Numerous correspondence to this permit holder ensued with no response documentation received. This site permit was revoked by Westmeath Co Co.</p> <p>Following information obtained in relation to the alleged acceptance of waste material to an unauthorised site. Westmeath WEO's followed up on this complaint and attended the site in question and interviewed both the haulier and the property owner. The LA satisfied itself that no offence occurred no further action as required.</p> <p>As part of the Annual Return validation process, WEO's would have used AR data and other data available from WCP holders through the NWCPO to cross check type &amp; quantities of waste materials accepted at these waste facilities.</p> <p>An unauthorised waste site which was identified and successfully prosecuted for the collection of storage of waste tyres, soil &amp; stone as well as other C&amp;D material, continued to operate during 2023. This site was monitored during 2023 and legal advice is awaited on the options for further enforcement actions during 2024.</p> <p>In relation to construction projects, all larger scale construction are required by planning condition to submit a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Construction &amp; Demolition Resource Waste Management Plan (RWMP) as set out in the Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource and Waste Management Plans for C&amp;D Projects (2021). These plans cover the responsible management of all waste in and out of the site. CEMP's and RWMP's are reviewed by Westmeath Co Co and are followed up with through on site inspections.</p> <p>In 2023, this Council inspected Article 27 notifications (origin / destination) in the county. In total, 14 Article 27 notifications were identified, and Inspectors from Westmeath Co Co Environment Section called to various destination sites identified and in all cases, no significant issues were encountered.</p>
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National Enforcement Priority: <b>WASTE – End of Life Vehicles (ELV) &amp; the Waste Metal sector</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting through the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'. The activity reported under the following RMCEI data categories should be considered under this NEP: 6.1.1-6.1.4 (ELV &amp; metal waste facilities), 6.1.12 (ELV &amp; metal waste collectors), 6.1.14.</b></p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk based inspections of Authorised Treatment Facilities and other ELV sites using WERLA intelligence and inspection templates (at least one inspection per annum of permitted sites). Multiagency inspections to be carried out as identified by WERLAs and the EPA.</li> <li>• Validation and inspection of records for WCP/WFP and licensed operators dealing with ELV and metal waste.</li> <li>• Take all necessary steps to resolve non-compliant issues.</li> </ul>	<p>There are 7 authorised treatment facilities in Westmeath. The waste data from previous years annual returns for each of these were assessed in 2023 and this highlighted one ATF's which were preliminary assessed but could not be fully closed out without further investigation.</p> <p>In conjunction with WERLA and the Waste Management Planning Office there were several site visits to a large scale Authorised Treatment facility. The facility was identified by WERLA as one of the top 10 WFP/ATFs in the region which should be considered for Audit.</p> <p>The first of these site visits was a site audit which took place in May 2023 with Westmeath Co Co EWO's and WERLA. This site visit was in relation to inaccuracies in data &amp; record keeping from the 2021 Annual Returns data and Waste Register. Upon request, documents were made available by the Waste Facility Site and after review of these documents both Westmeath Co Co EWO's and WERLA were not satisfied with the responses and documents received. The audit results were marked as inconclusive.</p> <p>A further audit was carried out onsite in July 2023 with the Waste Management Planning Office in order to review discrepancies in the previous year's 2022 annual returns particularly concerning data recorded by the permit holder in question, but no corresponding entry recorded on the opposing permit holder data return. The This audit also highlighted significant shortcomings in the facility's waste recording systems.</p> <p>The above audit initiated a further review of the Waste Register documents, this time for a more recent period of Quarter 1 of 2023.</p> <p>The concerns in relation to this site were in relation to the holding of a waste register on site and the Identification of inaccuracies in reporting/recording – tonnages, names of incoming waste and also inaccuracies in the way the site operator was operating the car take back scheme.</p>

	<p>In addition, further concern with this facility relates to the acceptance of waste material from unauthorised waste collectors.</p> <p>The investigation remains ongoing with further follow up multi-agency inspections planned in 2024.</p> <p>One suspected unauthorised ATF site was investigated in 2023 on the back of information from 3<sup>rd</sup> parties. The site had approximately 31 vehicles which appeared to fall into the List of Waste category 16 0104* "End of Life Vehicles which are not depolluted and therefore would represent a pollution risk if appropriate measures are not taken.</p> <p>On foot of this, Section 55 notices were issued to the registered owner and the reputed owner of the site ordering the cessation of the holding, recovery or disposal of End-of-Life vehicles and also the submission of documentary proof of the authorised disposal of the above mentioned end-of-life vehicles at an Authorised Treatment Facility or for the site owners to apply for a Waste Facility Permit under the Waste Management Act. The investigation remains open and this council may consider further enforcement action if necessary in 2024.</p>
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National Enforcement Priority: <b>WASTE - Waste Collection - Household &amp; Commercial</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting though the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'. The activity reported under the following RMCEI data categories should be considered under this NEP: 6.1.1-6.1.4 (HH &amp; Commercial waste facilities), 6.1.10, 6.1.11, 6.1.12 (HH &amp; Commercial waste collectors), 6.1.13, 6.2.9.</b></p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity <u>in the previous reporting year</u> – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection of WCP operators for provision of 3 bin system.</li> <li>• Surveys of retail, hospitality and industrial sectors to ensure proper use of 3 bin system, segregation and use of authorised collectors.</li> <li>• Sampling/analysis of treated waste outputs</li> <li>• AER Validations on WCP and WFP priority lists.</li> <li>• Maintenance of register of households with/without a waste collection service and targeted inspections in areas with low compliance.</li> <li>• Focused monitoring of the resources and systems available for gathering and reporting waste data to be carried out as part of site audits at waste facilities/waste collectors.</li> <li>• Monitoring of waste acceptance criteria at authorised sites.</li> </ul>	<p>There were 5 authorised waste collectors operating kerbside household waste collections in Westmeath in 2023.</p> <p>AR validation of 2022 data was undertaken on all WCP holders. This included a multi-agency investigation involving a desk top audit and a follow-up remote inspection in conjunction with the Waste Management Planning Office. Again, this permit holder was identified as one of the top 10 Waste Collection Permit holders in the region. The purpose of this was to examine supporting documentation in order to assess the Annual Return Data submitted by the permit holder. On foot of this multi-agency approach, No Amendments were made to the Annual Return and no supporting documentation was provided for identified anomalies. A further review of this site is scheduled to take place in Q1 2024.</p> <p>The roll out of Brown Bins in Westmeath continued to be a particular challenge. At the end of 2022, Based on NWCPO data, approximately 17% of householders in the agglomeration area avail of the Brown Bin collection service, which was one of the lowest take-up rates in the country. In light of this, Westmeath Co Co Environment section developed a detailed strategy to tackle this poor performance. Quarter 1 2023 meetings were held with all 5 authorised waste collectors to identify any issues they have encountered in the roll out of the brown bin service. From these meetings, one of the collectors noted that they had been inputting data incorrectly and were mistakenly including data from a neighbouring county on Westmeath's portal. Another Collector noted they had also been incorrectly reporting on the number of brown bins serving Apartment blocks. One holder of a brown was been inputted for an entire apartment block where as it should have been 1 brown bin holder per apartment unit within the apartment block.</p> <p>Each collector put forward proposals to try and improve the roll out of brown bins which included incentivised price plans and increased media promotions. We are awaiting the latest NWCPO brown bin rollout figures but</p>


	<p>from speaking with the waste collectors, 4 of the 5 waste collectors have noted they have seen a significant uptake and improvement in the brown bin from households.</p> <p>In conjunction with this, all waste complaints involving the potential unauthorised holding or disposal, would be required to provide documentary proof of authorised waste collection / disposal services, and if within the agglomeration proof of 3 bin service. This has generated 44 warning letters with 8 subsequent FPNs for failure to comply with this requirement.</p> <p>In 2023 Westmeath County Council investigated the waste management, segregation, and disposal regimes, for food waste at 10 commercial premises which included restaurants, shops and nursing homes. Of the 10 premises inspected, 6 were deemed to be compliant while 4 had no brown bins. These 4 premises were informed of the requirement to have a brown bin and follow up inspections are due to these premises in Q1 2024.</p> <p>The National Fleadh Cheol in 2023 was a major operation with regard to ensuring compliance with food waste, litter management and single use plastics. Authorised Officers were involved in the pre-planning stage to ensure that a robust waste management plan was incorporated. This was followed up by daily inspections during the 8 day festival to ensure that the Fleadh Management were adhering to the terms of the Waste Management Plan. Summary reports from the waste collector hired for the Fleadh Cheol noted that there was approx. 3.5 Tonnes of food waste collected during the 8 day festival compared to 1.2 Tonnes collected during the festival in 2022.</p> <p>With regards to Pay to Use Compactors, Westmeath currently have no PTU's approved in the county.</p>
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National Enforcement Priority: <b>WASTE - Producer Responsibility Initiatives and additional local priorities</b>	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting though the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'. The activity reported under the following RMCEI data categories should be considered under this NEP: 6.8.1-6.8.8.</b></p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity <u>in the previous reporting year</u> – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and inspection of all suspected producers who require registration.</li> <li>• Examination of potential for information exchange between Local Government Sector and other Agencies, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Inspection and follow up on site and operators of local concern not covered by the other waste NEPs.</li> </ul>	<p>Authorised Officers also called to 15 retailers selling electrical goods and batteries, targeting in particular new premises and those existing retailers that had been found not to be in full compliance in the previous year of 2022. All of these retailers were found to be in compliance in 2023.</p> <p>1 potentially unregistered tyre retailer was notified to this Council. A further 2 tyre retailers were investigated and both were found to be unregistered. One of the retail operations is associated with a larger prosecution which is currently under legal advisement. The 2<sup>nd</sup> unregistered retailer has indicated that he is intending to cease trading as soon as the planning permission for change of use of premises is granted. This investigation remains on-going.</p> <p>Four suspected major producers (SMP) of Packaging were investigated by this council in 2022. It was not possible in 2023 to carry out follow up inspections on these premises due to significant staff losses in the Environment department.</p> <p>Westmeath Co Co Environment department continued to liaise with Repak ELT/Circol ELT and have accessed the tyre portal to identify any potential unregistered retailers. 13 number unregistered retailers with revoked memberships were investigated. 5 of these retailers remain under investigation in 2024.</p>


National Enforcement Priority: AIR - Solid Fuel	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting though the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackle the sale of non-compliant fuel (including online sales) and its use via compliance promotion, inspection and enforcement of fuel merchants and retailers.</li> <li>• Participate in multi-agency operations investigating the sale of non-compliant fuels.</li> <li>• Carry out awareness programme to promote compliance by increasing the awareness of how the choices people make in heating their homes impacts on their air quality and health and legal obligations.</li> <li>• Establish and/or maintain a list, including the number and profile of solid-fuel merchants operating in each local authority area, including those using social medial platforms to market solids fuels.</li> <li>• Build capacity through engaging, collaborating and sharing with colleagues in other local authorities via networks and working groups and participating in training events.</li> </ul>	<p>During 2023, information letters were circulated to all known solid fuel retailers in advance of the heating season. 32 follow up inspections in total were carried out under the Solid Fuel Regulations (SFRs) in Westmeath during November and December. 23 of the 32 inspections were carried out in Mullingar town area and 9 were carried out in Athlone town area. Inspections of retailers were 100% compliant.</p> <p>In 2023, Westmeath County Council secured financial assistance from the DECC under the Solid Fuel Pilot Enforcement Grant. The project encompassed 3 aspects. Enforcement/Investigations, Media campaign/Awareness and Education.</p> <p><u>Enforcement/ Investigations:</u></p> <p>A targeted surveillance project was undertaken focusing on the sale of illegal unapproved fuel from unauthorised operators in local housing estates in Athlone &amp; Mullingar. This aspect of the project was undertaken by the Community Wardens out of normal working hours (managed and coordinated by the Environment Dept). The aim of the surveillance was to gather information on mobile operators that enter housing estates for the purpose of selling unapproved fuel. The information gathered from the surveillance could then be used in possible enforcement action in the future by WCC Environment section. An illegal mobile operator was noted on one evening of the surveillance and also another mobile operator led back to a premises from where the sale of smoky coal was occurring. These incidents are currently under investigation by WCC.</p> <p><u>Media campaign/ Awareness:</u></p> <p>An informative audio advertisement was created and a 6- week advert campaign was hosted on Midlands 103 radio and also on iRadio. The adverts reached the general population covering all areas of Westmeath. The adverts delivered a proactive message on how to "Care for our Air" through positive actions that can be carried</p>




	<p>out by the public. The advert also directed people to check their local air quality on <a href="http://www.airquality.ie">www. airquality.ie</a>. WCC utilised the 'Clean Air' campaign assets from the Dept on our Social Media pages to promote the campaign.</p> <p><u>Education:</u></p> <p>An informative "Care for our Air" leaflet was designed by WCC inhouse and delivered to specific housing estates in Mullingar &amp; Athlone where door to door awareness surveys were previously undertaken and temporary air monitors installed in Winter 2022. The "Care for our Air" leaflet provided information on choices that the public can make in order to lower the impact on air quality. This leaflet mail shot was carried out to build on the awareness campaign ran in 2022 during that year's solid fuels project.</p> <p>WCC Environment staff continue to work on compiling a Retailer Register for the entirety of Westmeath County.</p> <p>2 WCC Environment staff are part of the Solid Fuels Local Authority Implementation Group and participated at meetings during the year. In addition, staff participated in Solid Fuel Regulation training at the regional training centre in June of this year.</p>
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National Enforcement Priority: AIR - Air Quality Monitoring Activities and Data Use	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p><b>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting through the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</b></p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the EPA National Ambient Air Quality Unit to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assist EPA to troubleshoot issues at existing air quality monitoring stations including the nomination and notification to the EPA of a primary and secondary contact person.</li> <li>2. Assist (where possible, to the best extent possible) EPA to maintain existing and new air quality monitoring stations.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Review local air quality data to identify hotspots and to prioritise sites/areas for action.</li> <li>• Maintain availability of air quality data within the local authority functional area including a map to the general public for each local authority. As a minimum, a link to the relevant page(s) of the EPA site should be placed on each Local Authority website.</li> <li>• Awareness raising campaigns or information on LA websites or social media campaigns.</li> </ul>	<p>In 2023, Westmeath County Council continued to work alongside the EPA in relation to the maintenance of the two existing air quality monitoring stations in the county. The maintenance of these stations is now the responsibility of a third-party contractor and WCC facilitate access. In addition, WCC continue to check and reset the monitoring stations as required.</p> <p>Environment ensure the circulation of the monthly Air Quality Bulletin to the MDs and to highlight any exceedances to executive and elected members. On one occasion in 2023, the January bulletin indicated that the Air Quality limit at the Athlone station was breached on <b>16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2023</b> when the PM10 daily limit was exceeded. Air temperatures on that day had dipped below -4 degrees C so pollution from home heating is likely to have been a factor.</p> <p>EPA air quality data is currently available to the public through the link installed on the WCC website. WCCs environment section is currently in the process of updating their online information and the link to <a href="http://airquality.ie">airquality.ie</a> will be made more visible with the new webpage design.</p> <p>Environment Section availed of an opportunity to deploy Nox tubes provided by the EPA. In conjunction with the WCCs Active Travel Section, 40 Nox tubes installed, 20 each in Mullingar and Athlone town, were installed along proposed active travel routes to obtain baseline information on emissions. The tubes were installed over a period of 3 days in accordance with procedures detailed by the EPA. The tubes were deployed during October and November 2023 at various locations around both towns. Results indicate that no location was in exceedance of the annual mean limit of No2. The highest reading was in Athlone at 23.41ug/m3 (The EU limit is 40 Micrograms/m3.) Along with the results the following advice was given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The results give an estimate of the Annual Mean level of NO2.</li> <li>- These results provide a snapshot compared to a comprehensive monitoring programme. For proper validation at least 3 months data would be required, and ideally 12 months.</li> </ul> <p>Following installation of the active travel infrastructure it is the intention to repeat the surveys.</p>


	<p>When air quality associated issues are the subject of a complaint or representations to WCC, local air quality data from the EPA monitoring stations is referenced.</p> <p>See description of work carried out during the year under “Solid Fuel Inspections” title above, in relation to awareness raising campaigns and information on our website and social media campaign.</p>
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National Enforcement Priority: AIR - Environmental Noise Directive (ENDs)	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting though the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the <u>previous reporting year</u> – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish noise maps on Local Authorities' websites to communicate information to the public.</li> <li>• Prepare and submit the Annual Noise Action Plan Progress Report for Round 3 of Action Plans to the EPA by 28th February.</li> <li>• Annual Noise Action Plan Progress Report should demonstrate progress on the key issues and priority areas for action.</li> </ul>	<p>Submission of the local authority Noise Action Plan (NAP) Progress Report by 28th February 2024:</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The NAP progress report submission date was delayed until 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 due to resourcing issues.</p> <p>In line with the Environmental Noise Directive and the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006, Westmeath County Council produced and implemented its own Noise Action plan in 2018. This is a 5 year plan to run until the end of 2023. 2023 marked the 5th year of the plan.</p> <p>It is the goal of Westmeath County Council to adopt a strategic approach to the management of environmental noise with a view to preventing and reducing environmental noise in priority areas and limit noise levels where they are considered harmful and protect quiet areas. Westmeath County Council aims to promote a high level of protection and environmental health.</p> <p>Within the Noise Action Plan, Westmeath County Council has identified areas of high impact from environmental noise, principally along transport corridors by assessment of the TII and EPA noise maps.</p> <p>Where these noise maps indicate locations of likely high noise impact on existing residential units, consultants have been engaged to carry out more in-depth noise impact assessment and to propose suitable mitigation measures where necessary. This process is currently being carried out along the N6 Athlone Bypass. A consultant carried out an in-depth noise impact assessment at a number of residential properties and a mitigation design was proposed. The consultant modelled the acoustic benefits of the mitigation measures proposed and a cost benefit analysis has been carried out. The assessment and its conclusions are being considered with TII and the installation of any mitigation measures identified, will be subject to funding.</p>

	<p>At year end, TII funding had not been allocated. Westmeath County Council are currently liaising with the TII to install these necessary mitigation measures and this process is still ongoing and further assessment is scheduled in 2024.</p> <p>All residential or noise sensitive development proposals along the major transport corridors are being referred to Environment Section for assessment and development of suitable planning conditions and incorporation of mitigation measures when appropriate.</p>
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National Enforcement Priority: AIR - Air & Noise Control (including Planning)	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting though the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-planning assessments of air and noise impacts.</li> <li>• Environment staff assist in follow up of air and noise issues including use of Section 107 and 108 of the EPA Act, the Air Pollution Act and liaising with planners where planning enforcement is more appropriate.</li> <li>• Increased public awareness of noise induced health impacts.</li> </ul>	<p>It is policy within Westmeath County Council for all planning applications (excluding one-off domestic residential) to be referred to Westmeath County Council's Environment Department for full assessment and reporting.</p> <p>The Environment Department has developed a menu of standard planning conditions to be applied to non-domestic developments which aim to address potential noise and air emissions. These include odour, dust, noise and vibration emission limits for both the construction and operational phases of each development. These conditions have also included for the prohibition of any noise emissions with a tonal element which may cause nuisance over a considerable distance.</p> <p>In addition, all larger construction projects are required by planning condition to submit a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for approval. This plan covers the responsible management of all waste in and out of the site but also sets out noise, odour and dust emission limits and requires management plans for the mitigation, control and monitoring of these emissions for the duration of the construction phase of the project.</p> <p>In line with the Waste Management Act, the Air Pollution act, a prohibition on burning of waste on site is conditioned to each planning application.</p> <p>The Environment Department of Westmeath County Council reported on all planning applications for proposed residential units and other sensitive receptors which are likely to be severely impacted by environmental noise, primarily by reason of being in close proximity to a transport corridor, as detailed by the EPA and TII Noise mapping.</p> <p>Environment Section participate in all SHD / LRD statutory meetings at all stages of the planning process In particular in 2023, further information and alternative designs were sought for 1 large scale residential developments, in Athlone, which were deemed to be at risk of night-time environmental noise in excess of 40</p>

	<p>dBA (in line with WHO guidelines and the Westmeath Noise Action Plan). This required Noise Impact Assessment studies and noise modelling to be carried out by the Developer and re-designs incorporating mitigation measures to be submitted to Westmeath County Council for approval.</p> <p>In 2023 Westmeath Co Co assessed 155 planning applications with regards to Air &amp; Noise and other potential emission and Environmental impacts. In the previous year 2022, 97 Applications were assessed, which shows an increase of 58 applications assessed.</p> <p>A formal review of an air emissions licence is still ongoing by this Council in 2023 as a result of issues identified during odour patrols carried out by this council and concerns regarding apparent change of manufacturing process. Given the specialised nature of the emission analysis, external consultant are acting in an advisory capacity to advise and provide training to authorised officers in assessing complex chemistry of the emissions, the modelling and assessment of the emissions. A detailed site audit was carried out and a draft air emission licence was issued for comment to all stakeholders and this licence is due to be finalised in Q1 2024.</p>
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National Enforcement Priority: Air - Ongoing Air and Noise Enforcement Work	
Local Authority:	Activities
 Looking back at the year	<p>Tell the story of what your council did on this priority in the reporting year using the assessment criteria detailed in Table 2 of the guidance document. This is an opportunity to capture the impacts of the work completed to drive compliance. You are not required to duplicate data that you are submitting though the 'RMCEI data returns' or your 'RMCEI Plan'.</p> <p><i>[Guideline of 500 words per priority area]</i></p>
<p><b>Describe what was carried out under this activity in the previous reporting year – e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspect and carry out any required enforcement actions of facilities/activities as specified in the RMCEI template and/or as otherwise determined by the local authority.</li> <li>Make available on their websites, the EPA vehicle refinishers video and use appropriate channels to promote it.</li> <li>Inspect and carry out any required enforcement actions under Sections 107 and 108 of the EPA Act 1992, in order to limit noise nuisance.</li> <li>Build capacity through engaging, collaborating and sharing with colleagues in other local authorities via networks and working groups and participating in training events.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Deco Paints Regulations:</u></b></p> <p>3 inspections were carried out by WCC in 2023 under the EU (Paints, varnishes, vehicle refinishing products and activities) Regulations 2012. There are a total of 11 spray painter facilities registered in Westmeath which is one more than what was registered in 2022. WCC is a member of the NIECE network for enforcing and managing VOC's.</p> <p><b><u>Solvents Regulations:</u></b></p> <p>1 inspection was carried out by WCC in 2023 under the EU (Installations and Activities using Organic Solvents) Regulations 2012. There is 1 certified dry cleaner in Westmeath with 2 currently in the process of re-registering for certification. A number of dry cleaners in Westmeath have moved away from the use of Perc in the dry-cleaning process and switched to wet cleaning. Another dry cleaner has ceased operation in the county recently.</p> <p><b><u>Petroleum Vapour Regulations:</u></b></p> <p>17 inspections were carried out by WCC in 2023 under the Air Pollution Act 1987, (Petroleum Vapour Emissions) Regulations 1997. This is an increase of 5 on the 12 inspections that were carried out in 2022. A significant effort has been made in recent years to improve compliance with the PV regulations in the county through the undertaking of training and the development of a database of potentially unregistered petroleum retailers.</p> <p><b><u>Sites Licenced under the Air Pollution Act:</u></b></p> <p>In Westmeath, there are currently 3 Air Emission licences in operation. Throughout 2023, WCC acted effectively and proactively in monitoring the compliance of these air emission licences with the parameters of their licence.</p> <p>There was 1 site inspection and a review of all monitoring results submitted by the 3 licence holders. All licences were in compliance with their Air Licence in relation to the parameters on their licence.</p>



A formal review of an air emissions licence is still ongoing by this Council in 2023 as a result of issues identified during odour patrols carried out by this council and concerns regarding apparent change of manufacturing process. Given the specialised nature of the emission analysis, external consultant are acting in an advisory capacity to advise and provide training to authorised officers in assessing complex chemistry of the emissions, the modelling and assessment of the emissions. A detailed site audit was carried out and a draft air emission licence was issued for comment to all stakeholders with a final determination to follow in Q1.

In addition, this council is investigating a 2nd licensed site in relation to odours complaints but also in relation to contaminants picked up in sampling which are potentially linked to the facility. Emission results were reviewed and additional external advice has been engaged. The operator is currently co-operating with the Council and further inspections are scheduled for 2024.

**Local air and noise issues:**

WCC carried out noise monitoring at a local licensed music event in early Summer. This was one of two licensed large event applications that Environment reviewed. The noise monitoring at the event in question involved the use of our in- house Tango plus noise monitor. An events licence was issued to the promoter/organiser by the Council which included specified noise limits. 2 Council staff carried out nightly monitoring over the duration of the 3 day event . 5 noise sensitive locations were identified around the event location. Some of these sites were in areas where there were previous noise complaints in past years on the nights of the festival. No exceedances in noise limits were detected by the Council during the monitoring. If there was to have been an exceedance, there was a standard procedure agreed by the event organiser and the Council. Their sound engineer was contactable by phone and it was agreed any noise limit exceedances detected would be relayed to the sound engineer as they occurred and they would reduce amplification as required.

No noise complaints were received arising from this monitored event.

An investigation into a large Piggery (sub-IPC threshold) operation with a significant odour complaint history commenced involving meetings with the operator and his advisors and the review of proposals to ensure minimal nuisance beyond the facility boundaries. This investigation continues into 2014.

WCC staff participated in the EPA National Air Event in 2023.

WCCs Environmental Awareness Officer is in the process of updating the Environment page on the WCC website. This update will include making publicly available the updated registers under the Solvents and Deco paints regulations and having a link to relevant guidance including the EPA vehicle refinishers video.