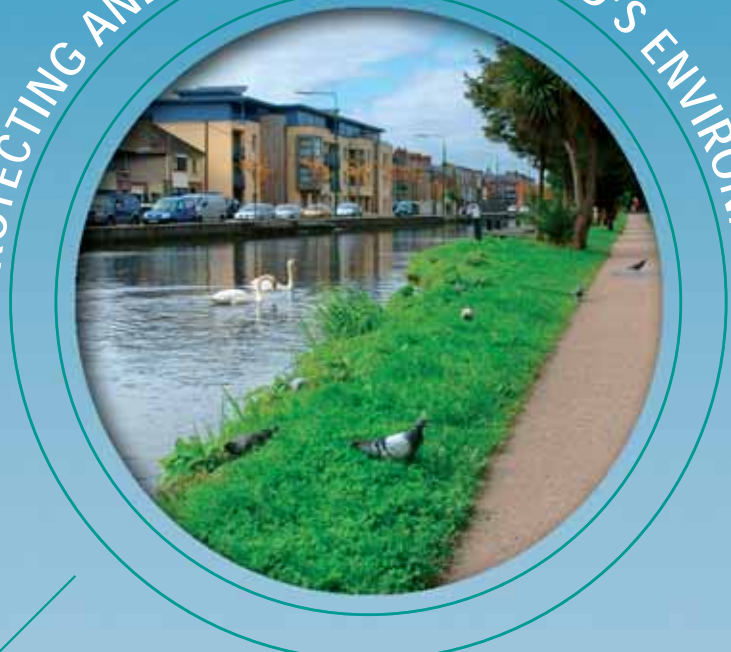




PROTECTING AND IMPROVING IRELAND'S ENVIRONMENT



# 2020 Vision





# 2020 Vision

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## DIRECTOR GENERAL'S FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce *2020 Vision – Protecting and Improving Ireland's Environment* – the third formal strategy produced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The strategy sets out a long-term vision for Ireland's environment to 2020 as well as the actions the EPA will undertake between 2007 and 2010 to achieve this vision.

The previous Strategic Plan (2003–2006) was published 10 years after the establishment of the EPA and was based on a comprehensive review of our activities. The review identified key priorities for the EPA, including a more rigorous approach to enforcement of environmental legislation and a higher priority for internal and external communication. In summary, our last Strategic Plan was primarily a framework for organisational change, which was successfully implemented. During this period we also took on a large amount of additional work arising out of new EU and national legislation.

### STRUCTURAL CHANGES

As part of the 2003–2006 plan, a range of structural changes were made:

- (a) The Office of Environmental Enforcement was established to focus on enforcement of licences issued by the EPA and on public authority enforcement.
- (b) The Office of Licensing and Guidance was charged with licensing and permitting functions, and with implementing the Emissions Trading Directive, Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive and National Waste Prevention Programme.
- (c) The Office of Environmental Assessment was given responsibility for environmental monitoring, implementation of Water Framework and Air Framework Directives, laboratory services and environmental research, informatics and reporting.
- (d) The Office of Communications and Corporate Services took responsibility for internal and external communications, information technology and all internal support services.
- (e) A separate unit was established to deal with the increasing demands on all organisations in the area of corporate governance.
- (f) During this four-year period, total staff numbers in the EPA increased from 240 to 290, reflecting major increases in responsibilities assigned to the agency.

### SOLID FOUNDATIONS

In implementing the Strategic Plan for the current period (2007–2010), the EPA wants to build on the foundations laid to date. Some things will not change. For example, the mission, vision and values of the organisation, elaborated last time round, continue to guide our decision-making. The revised organisational structure is serving us well and will remain in place, apart from reallocation of some responsibilities within and between Offices. In terms of organisation culture, the fundamental EPA values of facing up to difficult challenges, taking on new responsibilities as they emerge, and delivering results will continue to underpin our approach to environmental protection.

## UNDERSTANDING THE EPA: WHO WE ARE

### OUR MISSION

- ▶ To protect and improve the natural environment for present and future generations, taking into account the environmental, social and economic principles of sustainable development.

### OUR VISION

- ▶ A powerful agent for change
- ▶ An organisation that works to place environmental issues at the heart of international, national and local decision-making
- ▶ A credible and respected organisation speaking out courageously for the protection of the environment
- ▶ A world-class organisation in which people are proud to work

### OUR VALUES

- ▶ Integrity, independence and professionalism
- ▶ Service to stakeholders
- ▶ Value for money
- ▶ Respect and support for colleagues
- ▶ Openness and learning

## LOOKING FORWARD: ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

The focus in the current strategy (2007–2010) is strongly on the external environment, i.e. how the EPA can continue to improve the delivery of positive environmental outcomes. We want to build on our scientific expertise by becoming a proactive, forceful environmental champion with a key focus on environmental management. This focus is moving us beyond identification of environmental issues towards the active resolution of the root causes.

To this end, we have identified six key environmental goals that capture the main environmental challenges in Ireland over the coming years. Under each goal, we list the sub-issues that need to be addressed and how the EPA will contribute to resolving these.

## 2020 VISION: A LONGER-TERM TIMEFRAME

We are aware that some aspects of our strategy will take more time than the period covered by this Strategic Plan (2007–2010). We have therefore set the environmental goals in a longer timeframe – to the year 2020. The selected goals will inform our organisational strategy over the coming years; everything we do will be moving towards resolving these. In line with our organisation culture, all the plans developed will include measurable outcomes in the short and longer timeframes.

## REFLECTING THE BEST PUBLIC SERVICE VALUES

This Strategic Plan (2007–2010) is set in the context of the continuing modernisation and development of the public service. *Towards 2016*, the 10-year social partnership agreement, adopts a medium-term outlook for the public sector and focuses on modernisation, flexibility and effectiveness in public service delivery. *2020 Vision* builds in the requirements of *Towards 2016* in terms of team-working, the deployment of new technology, e-government, improved service delivery and the management of change. New demands arising out of EU and national environmental legislation will be met in flexible and creative ways. The increasing corporate governance requirements will also be fully addressed, and the EPA will continue to pursue best practice in this area.

## REFLECTING THE VIEWS OF OUR STAKEHOLDERS

I am very pleased with the responses received from the consultation process on our *2020 Vision* document. Of the over 70 sets of comments and observations we received, 90 per cent came from members of the public. This shows that the people of Ireland continue to view the environment as one of their top priorities. This point was reinforced by the fact that most submissions dealt with a wide range of subjects, indicating that people's interests were not focused on single issues. What was also notable was the depth of understanding the submissions demonstrated.

The vast majority of the submissions received, agreed with and endorsed the six environmental goals set out in the document. Some submissions were critical of the Environmental Protection Agency and its role. Each of the submissions has been studied in detail and, where possible, we have amended the strategy to take account of comments received. Other comments will be taken account of in the implementation phase.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the consultation process for their time and energy and for the improvements they have helped us make to our *2020 Vision*. I would also like to acknowledge the staff of the Environmental Protection Agency for their constructive inputs in shaping this Strategy. My thanks also go to the Advisory Committee to the Environmental Protection Agency for its advice in the development of the Strategy.

I look forward to leading the Environmental Protection Agency in delivering this strategy.

**Dr. Mary Kelly**  
**Director General,**  
**Environmental Protection Agency**

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

The Environmental Protection Agency is a statutory body set up by the Oireachtas and assigned responsibility for the implementation of a wide range of European and national legislation. We play our part as a regulator, as a provider of expert independent environmental advice and information, and as an advocate for Ireland's environment. This *2020 Vision* strategy sets out our vision for Ireland's environment over the coming decade and beyond. The vision is focused on delivering positive outcomes in a number of critical environmental areas.

## THE BIG PICTURE

*2020 Vision* is set within the overall context of sustainable development. This concept recognises that social, economic and environmental issues are interconnected and that good decisions and policy should encompass these three elements in a balanced and harmonious way. The natural resources and environmental conditions that are fundamental to the economic and social well-being of future generations must not be exhausted or degraded.

The environment is a key resource for Ireland, and must continue to be protected and improved to ensure that it remains the basis for a healthy society and a thriving economy. There have been significant developments in environmental protection and management in Ireland over the past decades, most of which have arisen as a result of EU environmental policy and the implementation of EU legislation. These have driven environmental improvements and protection measures across a broad range of areas including water and air quality, protection of species and habitats, waste management and environmental licensing of industry. Current EU legislation initiatives are underpinned by the EU's Sixth Environmental Action Programme, which sets out the overall policy framework on the environment. A suite of EU thematic strategies to address specific topics such as environment and health and the sustainable use of resources are also in place, and Ireland has a range of international obligations and commitments on the environment, most notably in relation to climate change and the Kyoto Protocol.

## KEY ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Our regular State of the Environment reports provide an overall assessment of the quality of Ireland's environment and identify the pressures being brought to bear. Our assessments have confirmed that, in comparison to most other EU countries, Ireland's environment is still of a high standard. However, pressures on the environment have increased significantly as Ireland's economy has grown. In the past 10 years these pressures have accelerated at a rate that far exceeds that observed in other EU countries.

Our most recent assessment identified five overall environmental priorities for Ireland: three specific thematic challenges and two general challenges for environmental protection. The three specific challenges are:

- meeting international commitments on air emissions (greenhouse gases and acidifying gases)
- prevention and control of eutrophication (over-enrichment of waters by nutrients)
- waste management.

The two general challenges are:

- better integration of environmental and natural resource considerations into the policies, plans and actions of economic sectors
- improving the enforcement of environmental legislation.

## 2020 VISION GOALS

Our *2020 Vision* outlines six environmental goals, reflecting the main challenges identified in our State of the Environment reports as well as key issues at the global and EU levels. These goals are:

- limiting and adapting to climate change
- clean air
- protected waters
- protected soil and biodiversity
- sustainable use of natural resources
- integration and enforcement.

*2020 Vision* also identifies our EPA organisational goals. We want to build on our reputation and ensure that we are seen as an organisation with strengths in four key areas:

- competent and committed people
- environmental champion
- customer-focused
- organisationally efficient.

## A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

While our *2020 Vision* is an ambitious strategy that will contribute positively to the sustainable development of Ireland, we are very conscious that the EPA is not the sole organisation with environmental responsibilities. Achieving the longer term goals will not be possible without the active cooperation of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, local authorities, a range of public and private bodies with environmental responsibilities, environmental NGOs and individual citizens. Part of our strategy over the next four years will be to engage with key organisations and individuals to achieve consensus on our *2020 Vision* and build a cooperative approach towards closing the gaps identified. A key focus for us will be to inform policy-makers, stakeholders and the public on environmental issues and solutions, and to promote good environmental behaviour and standards.

## HOW THIS DOCUMENT IS STRUCTURED

**Section 1** sets out a medium-term vision for the natural environment in the six key goal areas.

**Section 2** contains a shorter-term strategy for the EPA in 2007–2010.

**Section 3** details the organisational development that will deliver a high-performance EPA in 2007–2010.

We will separately develop implementation plans that identify the specific tasks to be carried out under each goal, the timeframes involved and the people responsible. Annual work programmes will be prepared that will allow every EPA employee to see how their work contributes to our overall strategy. The objectives set out in *2020 Vision* will be pursued relentlessly, and adapted where necessary, with progress reported in our Annual Reports.





# SECTION 1: ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

TIMESCALE: 2007–2020



## TIMESCALE: 2007–2020

### ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

To realise our vision of protecting and improving Ireland's environment, we have selected six environmental goals. These reflect the main challenges to be faced over the coming years. Under each goal heading we have identified the central issues that need to be addressed. Later sections of the document will demonstrate how the EPA will contribute to resolving these issues.



# GOAL 1: LIMITING AND ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

## UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

- Global Issue:** Human-induced climate change is an urgent global issue and is the primary environmental challenge of this century. Increased levels of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide act to enhance the natural greenhouse effect and accelerate irreversible changes in the climate. What is distinctive about the current period of global warming, compared to previous cycles of climate change, is the extent and rate of change, which exceeds natural variation. The impacts of climate change present very serious global risks and threaten the basic components of life, including health, access to water, food production and the use of land. As the earth gets warmer the damage from climate change will accelerate.
- Long-term Effects:** The global average temperature has risen by 0.76°C over the past 100 years, with the 1990s being the warmest decade in the last millennium. It is predicted that climate change impacts will increase significantly if global temperatures increase by more than 2°C above pre-industrial times. Research has shown that the potential effects of climate change in Ireland include greater risks of coastal flooding due to sea-level rises and storm surges; water shortages; more intense rainfall events; and impacts on agriculture and biodiversity.
- Multiple Sources:** Greenhouse gas emissions arise from a range of sources including transport, energy production, agriculture and industrial processes. In Ireland, while agriculture is the largest source, transport is by far the fastest growing sector, with emissions more than double what they were in 1990. Irish per capita emissions of greenhouse gases remain among the highest in Europe.
- Challenging Target:** Under the Kyoto Agreement, Ireland has committed to limiting the increase of greenhouse gases to 13 per cent above its 1990 levels: a limit that has to be reached during the period 2008–2012. This can be achieved through an emissions reduction programme, and/or emissions allowances that can be purchased from countries that have successfully lowered emissions. Current levels of Irish greenhouse gas emissions are more than 25 per cent above 1990 levels.

For the period beyond 2012, the EU Council of Ministers has recently committed to achieving at least a 20 per cent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, compared to 1990 levels. The Council also agreed to extend this target to a 30 per cent reduction if other developed countries commit to comparable reductions. Ireland's share of the reduction target has yet to be agreed.

The National Climate Change Strategy has set a range of targets to be progressively attained by 2020. It incorporates the commitments outlined in the Government's White Paper on *Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland* and the *National Bioenergy Action Plan*. These include a target of 12 per cent renewable energy share in the heating sector; achieving a 10 per cent penetration of biofuels in road transport; achieving 33 per cent of electricity consumption from renewable energy sources; installing 500MW ocean energy capacity and achieving 800MW from combined heat and power.
- Abatement and Adaptation:** The global long-term and insidious nature of climate change means that even if greenhouse gas levels were reduced now, some impacts would be unavoidable. There are risks particularly in relation to flooding, water resources, river basin management, agriculture and biodiversity. We need to plan now to adapt to these changes, reducing the adverse impacts of climate change.

## 2020 GOAL *“Ireland will achieve major reductions in green-house gas emissions and will be prepared for the unavoidable impact of climate change.”*



### WHAT MUST HAPPEN TO **ACHIEVE THIS GOAL...**

1. Ireland must meet its Kyoto obligations on limiting its greenhouse gas emissions to 13 per cent above 1990 levels, during the period 2008–2012.
2. Future reduction targets beyond 2012 that are to be set for Ireland, at EU and international level, must be met.
3. The National Climate Change Strategy must be actively monitored and fully implemented.
4. The targets and commitments in the Government White Paper on *Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland* and the *National Bioenergy Action Plan* must be met at a minimum.
5. Transport (including aviation), energy and spatial planning policies must take full account of climate change issues and greenhouse gas emissions.
6. Energy efficiency must be integral to industrial and commercial activities, transport and domestic life.
8. All future national and local/regional development plans must be climate-proofed to minimise the unavoidable effects of weather-related impacts.
9. Ireland needs to be at the forefront of adopting new approaches and low-carbon technologies that will work in the national context.

## GOAL 2: CLEAN AIR

### UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

- Health Impact:** At the most basic level, each of us is entitled to clean air and to know that the air we breathe is not going to cause us harm. Long-term exposure to air pollutants has impacts on health ranging from minor effects on the respiratory system to reduced lung function, cardio-vascular disease, asthma, chronic bronchitis and reduced life expectancy. On the other hand, improved air quality can have a positive impact on health. The main air pollutants of concern include fine particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>), nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, volatile organic compounds and ozone-depleting substances.
- High Standard:** By international standards, air quality in Ireland is very good. Our relatively low-density towns and cities, geographical position and island status all contribute positively to this quality. The prevailing westerly winds are a huge advantage to Ireland, constantly renewing our supply of fresh air.
- International Dimension:** One of the key issues for Ireland is to reduce its emissions of four transboundary air pollutants (sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and ammonia) in line with its international commitments. These pollutants add to acidification and eutrophication of sensitive ecosystems across the European landmass, and can damage forests, rivers, lakes and other ecosystems as well as buildings and historical sites.
- Biggest Threat:** Emissions of particulate pollutants from road traffic, especially in urban areas, are the main threat to air quality in Ireland. While improved technologies have reduced emissions from individual vehicles, this has been offset by the increasing number and bigger engine sizes of vehicles on Ireland's roads. Emissions from industrial and waste facilities, including power plants, can also contribute to poor air quality, as can emissions of ammonia from livestock manures and slurries.
- Local Issues:** The main issues at local level are environmental noise (for example, from road traffic, industrial activities and construction sites) and malodours from wastewater treatment plants and waste and industrial facilities. These can cause nuisance to those living near by, and can negatively affect living and working conditions.
- Difficult Challenge:** Ireland faces a significant challenge in meeting EU emission limits for air pollutants. Meeting these targets is important from a compliance perspective, but we also wish to be good neighbours and show environmental leadership.

## 2020 GOAL *“Our air will be healthy and clean. Ireland’s emissions to the atmosphere will meet all international and national targets.”*



### WHAT MUST HAPPEN TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL...

1. Good air quality must be maintained so as not to adversely affect human health and the environment.
2. Ireland must be in compliance with its international commitments on air quality and air emissions.
3. Ireland must fully embrace the EU's Clean Air for Europe Programme (CAFÉ) and the associated EU thematic strategy on air pollution.
4. Industrial emissions of pollutants to air must be rigorously controlled.
5. There must be a modal shift from the private car to high-quality public transport.
6. Government departments, national agencies and local authorities must make air quality an integral part of their traffic management and planning processes.
7. The links between health and air quality must be better communicated to raise awareness and understanding of this critical issue.
8. The National Environmental Noise Regulation must be fully implemented and enforced.

## GOAL 3: PROTECTED WATER RESOURCES

### UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

1. **Important Resource:** Ireland has an abundant supply of fresh water, although this is not evenly distributed across the country. The quality of this resource is vital, as we depend on surface and groundwater sources for our drinking water. Water is also important as a habitat for freshwater and marine plants and animals and as an amenity for us to enjoy.
2. **Surface Waters:** Currently the water quality in approximately 70 per cent of our river channel, 90 per cent of lake area and 78 per cent of estuarine and coastal waters monitored is of satisfactory quality. Of particular concern is the ongoing loss of high-status water quality sites in rivers and lakes.
3. **Groundwaters:** In some rural areas groundwaters are an important source of drinking water. However, there is still widespread contamination of groundwaters across the country, particularly in the southeast, with about 30 per cent of samples analysed showing bacterial contamination. Preventing groundwater contamination is vital as, once polluted, it can be extremely difficult to remediate.
4. **Bathing Waters:** Polluted bathing waters pose a risk to human health and the environment. Ireland's designated inland and coastal bathing waters are among the cleanest in Europe, with 96 per cent of sites complying with the basic EU standards and 91 per cent complying with the stricter guideline standards.
5. **Main Threat:** The most widespread threat to the quality of our surface waters is the inputs of phosphorus and nitrogen above background levels. The principal sources of these nutrients are municipal sewage discharges and losses from agricultural activities. In addition, a significant proportion of private drinking water supplies are contaminated by bacteria.
6. **Major Challenges:** It is estimated that more than half of the surface water and groundwater bodies in Ireland are at risk of failing to meet EU water quality objectives. Bringing water resources up to standard, eliminating contamination of drinking water supplies and implementing water conservation measures (e.g. reducing leakages in the distribution network) are key priorities for Ireland. The provision of urban wastewater treatment for all inland receiving waters is also a major challenge.
7. **Beyond Catch-up:** Access to clean drinking water is a strategic issue for public health. The supply of large quantities of clean water to an ever-increasing population depends on the proper infrastructure being in place at the right time. It follows that we need to begin to plan for future water usage and wastewater treatment needs, and to move beyond a system of catch-up infrastructure.



## 2020 GOAL *“Our surface water and groundwater will not be depleted and will be of excellent quality, meeting all national and international standards.”*



### WHAT MUST HAPPEN TO **ACHIEVE THIS GOAL...**

1. Water must be managed as a key national resource and used in a sustainable manner by all sectors of the economy.
2. Public drinking water supplies and group water schemes must be in compliance with EU and national standards. Contamination of drinking waters must be eliminated.
3. The EU Water Framework Directive must be fully complied with – river basin management plans must be in place by 2009 and the environmental objectives met by 2015.
4. Ireland's Nitrates Action Plan must be fully implemented to tackle pollution from diffuse agricultural sources.
5. Discharges to surface waters and groundwaters must be controlled and incidences of pollution must be accurately traced back to their source and tackled.
6. The number of designated bathing water sites in Ireland (inland and coastal) should be increased from 131 to at least 160 sites.
7. All designated bathing areas must comply with the new EU bathing water quality standards, when they come into force.
8. Planning for sewerage and provision of drinking water must be better linked to physical planning and development to cater for projected increases in usage. Pollution from sewage treatment plants must be eliminated.
9. The public must have easier access to timely and targeted information on water.

## GOAL 4: PROTECTED SOIL AND BIODIVERSITY

### UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

- 1. Natural Beauty:** In Ireland we have many areas of outstanding natural beauty and a distinctive natural heritage. Our island status and geographical position at the edge of the European continent have given us habitats, ecosystems and wildlife species that are often scarce or absent across much of the rest of Europe and hence are of international importance. These include wetlands, machairs, shingle beaches, coastal lagoons and a complete range of bog types. The country also has the largest populations of otters and freshwater crayfish in Europe, and one of only five known European populations of bottlenose dolphins.
- 2. National Asset:** The value of our landscape, soil and biodiversity needs to be fully appreciated by all. As well as having an intrinsic value to the country, it is also important from an economic perspective. For example, good soil quality is the foundation for successful farming activities and our tourism industry is very much dependent on the quality of the natural environment and landscape.
- 3. Under Threat:** Many plants and animals are unable to adapt to changes in the environment brought about by human activities and are indicators of overall health of the environment. While some species are doing well, a number of native Irish species and their habitats are under threat from a variety of pressures, including intensification of agriculture, drainage of wetlands, climate change, forestry plantation, peat extraction, land clearance and the continuing spread of urban areas. Other threats include the introduction of invasive species of plants and animals that can alter local habitats and communities, putting native species at risk.
- 4. Land Contamination:** Ireland has significantly fewer contaminated land problems than most other heavily industrialised countries. Where such problems arise, they are most commonly associated with old gasworks sites, former waste disposal sites and worked-out mining sites.
- 5. Greater Protection:** In terms of biodiversity, we need to protect and manage what is important and special. 60 habitats and 25 species in Ireland are recognised as being of European importance and in need of special protection. The national biodiversity plan was published by the Government in 2000 and is beginning to be implemented. However, while progress has been made in designating areas for nature protection and conservation, we are still behind the rest of Europe in terms of the percentage of our national territory designated.
- 6. Information Deficit:** One of the main shortcomings in managing biodiversity is the lack of data and records to provide baseline and up-to-date information on distribution and abundance of species and on some habitats, particularly wetlands. It is hoped that the National Biological Records Centre, established in 2006, will address this information deficit. Similarly, information on soils and soil quality is currently disparate, incomplete and not readily available to policy-makers.

## 2020 GOAL *“The soil of Ireland will be protected from contamination and loss and will support dependent plants and animals. Our biodiversity will be protected and managed for future generations to enjoy.”*



### WHAT MUST HAPPEN TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL...

1. EU and national legislation in relation to protecting natural heritage must be fully implemented; the EU-established targets on halting the loss of biodiversity and the ecological objectives of the Water Framework Directive must be attained.
2. The actions identified in the *National Biodiversity Action Plan* must be successfully delivered.
3. Biological resources (e.g. fisheries) must be exploited in a sustainable manner.
4. A National Soil Protection Strategy, including the identification of soils at risk and addressing the need to establish a soil monitoring network, must be prepared and implemented.
5. Policies of Government departments and agencies should fully reflect and support the need for conservation of biodiversity (in particular those species and varieties local to Ireland) and the sustainable management of natural heritage landscapes and soil.
6. The identification and designation of protected areas must be completed and a comprehensive programme put in place to monitor the condition of these areas.
7. Threats to biodiversity must be identified and all-island species action plans must be prepared and implemented for species of highest conservation value.
8. A national policy for the control of invasive alien species must be developed and implemented.
9. Local authorities must make and implement county biodiversity action plans to address protection of natural heritage at local level.
10. Further initiatives to promote environmentally sustainable farming practices and landspreading should be developed and should include nature conservation as a priority.
11. Information on biodiversity, conservation areas and soils must be completed, maintained and made readily available to aid evidence-based decision-making on biodiversity and soil protection issues.
12. Former waste disposal sites and worked-out mining sites must be identified and plans put in place to remediate these.

## GOAL 5: SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES



### UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

1. **Resource Usage:** Environmental degradation can be caused in the manufacturing, distribution, usage or disposal of products and services. We currently use natural resources inefficiently and create too much waste. If current trends continue unabated, our natural resources will be depleted. To reverse this unsustainable trend, we need to move beyond controlling emissions and waste, and begin to address the more fundamental issues of sustainable production and consumption.
2. **Producer Responsibility:** Producer responsibility initiatives ensure that the cost of collection and recycling of products when they become waste is borne by the manufacturer or importer. The EU Directives on waste from electrical and electronic equipment, packaging waste and end-of-life vehicles are based on the premise of producer responsibility. Their implementation in Ireland will significantly impact the management of these important waste streams.
3. **Prevention is the Key:** Prevention is the most desirable method of waste management since the absence of waste eliminates the need for handling, transportation, treatment and disposal. Prevention of waste provides the highest level of environmental protection, optimises the use of available resources and removes a potential source of pollution.
4. **Upward Trend:** Waste generation and resource use are increasing in Ireland in tandem with economic growth. Waste is generated by all sectors of Irish society including industry, households and agriculture. Preventing and managing waste continues to be one of the toughest environmental challenges facing Ireland.
5. **Meeting Targets:** While good progress is being made towards meeting national and EU waste recycling targets, Ireland is over-reliant on landfilling of waste. We are a long way from meeting EU targets for diverting biodegradable waste from landfill. Under the EU Landfill Directive, Ireland is required by 2016 to reduce its landfill of biodegradable municipal waste to 35 per cent of the amount produced in 1995 – a considerable challenge. Through tight control and regulation the number of landfills has reduced from over 100 unlined and unregulated dumps to 34 authorised municipal landfills that operate to modern EU standards.
6. **Illegal Dumping:** While large-scale illegal dumping is no longer taking place in Ireland, there is evidence of a large volume of uncollected domestic waste, fly-tipping (sporadic, small-scale dumping), littering and uncontrolled backyard burning of waste.

**2020 GOAL** *The overall goal is a more efficient use of resources (water, energy and materials). Waste will be prevented and minimised, with the balance safely collected, recycled or recovered. Final disposal will be completed in a way that does not harm the environment."*

#### WHAT MUST HAPPEN TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL...

1. Ireland must fully embrace the principles of the EU's thematic strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources, including water and energy.
2. Products must be designed and marketed to minimise environmental costs in their manufacture, use and end of life – with producers responsible for the end-of-life fate of products. Prices of goods must reflect all these costs, based on full global environmental impact.
3. Industries, retailers and other business enterprises must exercise stewardship over their products and services, and waste generation must be minimised to reflect the principles of sustainable development.
4. New technologies must be identified and exploited to ensure cleaner, more efficient methods of production.
5. National waste management policy must continue towards defining and implementing increased resource productivity in society as a whole, and the upward trend of waste generation must be reversed.
6. The necessary key infrastructure for the management of waste and recovery of resources must be delivered.
7. EU and national targets must be met, including those on diverting biodegradable waste from landfill and on recycling of waste.
8. Waste management service costs must incorporate both the monetary costs of service provision and the costs associated with environmental management and remediation, in line with the 'polluter pays' principle.
9. Waste management facilities must continue to be tightly controlled, operate to international best practice, and maximise the potential to recover energy and other reusable materials.
10. The collection, movement and treatment of waste must be subject to strong enforcement.
11. Realistic and long-term outlets for recycled materials must be in place and indigenous recycling enterprises encouraged.
12. Good waste prevention and management practices must become commonplace in the home and the workplace. Undesirable activities, including fly-tipping, littering and backyard burning of household waste, must become a thing of the past.



## GOAL 6: INTEGRATION AND ENFORCEMENT



### UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

1. **Key Challenges:** Two of the key environmental protection challenges in Ireland are to improve enforcement of environmental legislation and to better integrate environmental considerations into the policies, plans and actions of all sectors of the economy.
2. **Economic Well-being:** The environment is often seen as pulling against the objectives of economic development or other social needs. However, economic and social well-being is intrinsically linked with protecting our environment and putting it at the heart of Irish society. The principle of sustainable development is that the natural resources and environmental conditions fundamental to the economic and social well-being of future generations are not exhausted or degraded, but enhanced and maintained.
3. **Enforcement Network:** Environmental licensing in Ireland is now very well advanced and much of the focus has shifted to enforcement. Enforcement and remediation costs that can run into millions of euro are an increasing deterrent to would-be polluters. The Environmental Enforcement Network, which is coordinated by the EPA, has brought together the various agencies that have a role in enforcement. The goal is a higher and more consistent standard of enforcement, ensuring that those who flout environmental laws are made to pay for their actions.
4. **Improved Performance:** Many of the major industries licensed by the EPA have improved their performance and reduced their impact on the environment. It is important that businesses and enterprises appreciate fully the importance of obtaining a licence. Small to medium-sized enterprises that fall outside the EPA's licensing regime can also have a significant cumulative impact on the environment.
5. **Responsible Behaviour:** Recent surveys of the public have shown that as a nation, we have made dramatic improvements in environmentally responsible behaviour and in our stewardship of the environment. However, problems remain, with a substantial minority taking part in activities such as littering, fly-tipping and backyard burning of household waste. There is a major communications challenge here – to alert the public and material players about how they impact the environment.
6. **Conflict Reduction:** Environmental issues (e.g. the location of particular facilities) can lead to high levels of conflict. Current methods of resolution do not always allow for reasoned debate, and positions of the parties can often become polarised.



## 2020 GOAL *“Environmental considerations will be at the heart of policy-making and decision-making. Responsible environmental behaviour will be the norm across all sectors of society and those who flout environmental laws will be held to account.”*

### WHAT MUST HAPPEN TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL...

1. National Development Plans for Ireland must incorporate the principles of sustainable development and give equal status to economic prosperity, social equity and environmental protection.
2. EU and national environmental laws must be vigorously implemented and enforced, and there must be greater cooperation among the relevant agencies to tackle serious environmental offences.
3. Policies, plans and programmes across Government departments and state agencies must fully embrace environmental considerations in an integrated way and, where appropriate, be subject to strategic environmental assessment. Enterprises must take environmental considerations on board in their business activities.
4. Those who flout environmental law and cause pollution must be made to pay for remediation and clean-up, in line with the ‘polluter pays’ principle.
5. Local authorities must be proactive guardians and stewards of the environment in their areas.
6. Our approach to environmental protection and enhancement must become a role model for other countries to emulate.
7. Ireland’s 4 million+ citizens need to become more environmentally conscious to help deliver the vision and goals identified in this document.
8. The EU Directives and regulations in relation to the access to information, public participation and justice in environmental decision-making must be fully implemented.
9. More effective methods and approaches need to be developed to reduce conflict over environmental issues to the lowest practicable level.







The background of the page is a scenic landscape. In the foreground, a large, leafless tree stands on the left side of a paved road. The road curves from the bottom left towards the right. To the right of the tree is a vibrant yellow field, likely rapeseed. In the background, a small village with white houses and dark roofs is visible on a hillside. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

## SECTION 2:

# HOW THE EPA WILL CONTRIBUTE TO ACHIEVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

**TIMESCALE: 2007–2010**

The Environmental Protection Agency is already addressing many of the environmental challenges posed. Under each of the key goal areas, we list our key action plans for 2007–2010.

## GOAL 1: LIMITING AND ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

*“Ireland will achieve major reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and will be prepared for the unavoidable impact of climate change.”*

### THE EPA RESPONSE: 2007-2010

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPION

- 1.1 Operate the EU Emissions Trading Scheme in Ireland. This will include preparation of national allocation plans, issuing of allocations and permits to the trading scheme facilities, and monitoring, verifying and reporting carbon dioxide emissions of the facilities.
- 1.2 Help reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and promote energy efficiency by working with national, regional and local bodies.
- 1.3 Advocate for the greater penetration of renewable resources and investment in public transport.

#### LICENSING & ENFORCEMENT

- 1.4 Control greenhouse gas emissions at licensed industrial and waste sites through our licensing systems and emissions trading scheme.
- 1.5 Monitor facilities licensed by the EPA to check that they are in compliance with their licence conditions, and take action against those not in compliance.

#### MONITORING, INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS

- 1.6 Provide analysis and informed advice to policy-makers and decision-makers on emissions reduction strategies and adaptation measures.
- 1.7 Meet Ireland's international obligations by preparing national inventories on greenhouse gas emissions for submission to the EU and other international bodies.
- 1.8 Continue to raise awareness among the public of climate change issues, highlighting the need to reduce emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- 1.9 Provide advice and support to Government departments and state agencies in relation to flood risk and water resources management by compiling information on river flows and levels from the national network of hydrometric monitoring stations.

#### RESEARCH & CAPACITY-BUILDING

- 1.10 Coordinate and publish research on climate change in Ireland and participate in international research activities on mitigation and adaptation and on emissions reduction potentials.
- 1.11 Target new research on the use and deployment of low carbon technologies and on assessing barriers to behavioural change.

*“Our air will be healthy and clean. Ireland’s emissions to the atmosphere will meet all international and national targets.”*

## THE EPA RESPONSE: 2007-2010

### ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPION

- 2.1 Lead the implementation of the EU Air Quality Framework Directive in Ireland.
- 2.2 Direct the implementation of the EU legislation on ozone-depleting substances and persistent organic pollutants.
- 2.3 Help establish air quality monitoring regimes and improve air quality in local areas by working with local authorities.
- 2.4 Advocate for the use of cleaner fuels and the greater penetration of renewable energy sources for transport, industrial, commercial and residential use.

### LICENSING & ENFORCEMENT

- 2.5 Control emissions to air from industrial and waste management activities through our Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) and waste licensing systems.
- 2.6 Monitor facilities licensed by us to check they are in compliance with specified limits and take action against those not in compliance.
- 2.7 Prevent odour and noise nuisances at licensed sites through targeted enforcement activities.
- 2.8 Ensure that local authorities resolve complaints in relation to environmental noise and local air quality by using our statutory powers.

### MONITORING, INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS

- 2.9 Protect public health by reporting on air quality to the public and policy-makers and by alerting the public to breaches of thresholds for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and ground-level ozone concentrations.
- 2.10 Meet Ireland’s international obligations by preparing annual national inventories of emissions and projections to air for submission to the EU and other international bodies.
- 2.11 Inform the public on air quality and air emissions in Ireland by developing an integrated web-based information resource.

### RESEARCH & CAPACITY-BUILDING

- 2.12 Continue to promote state-of-the-art research to inform policy-makers and effect change.
- 2.13 Support and publish environmental research on:
  - a. national and regional air quality forecasting
  - b. improving emission inventories and reducing uncertainty
  - c. the effects of transboundary air pollutants
  - d. natural contribution of particulate matter.

## GOAL 3: PROTECTED WATER RESOURCES

2007–2010

*“Our surface water and groundwater will not be depleted and will be of excellent quality, meeting all national and international standards.”*

### THE EPA RESPONSE: 2007-2010

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPION

- 3.1 Ensure that river basin management plans are in place to address the main issues in each basin by working in partnership with other organisations, in particular the local authorities and river basin management districts.
- 3.2 Coordinate the operation of the Water Framework Directive monitoring programmes for groundwaters, rivers, lakes, and transitional and coastal waters, and carry out the monitoring tasks assigned to the EPA.
- 3.3 Promote sustainable infrastructure development and provide advice and assistance to local authorities to assist them in protecting local water resources in their area.

#### LICENSING & ENFORCEMENT

- 3.4 Ensure that facilities licensed by the EPA under its IPPC and waste licensing systems are in compliance with their specified limits and that action is taken against those not in compliance.
- 3.5 Control discharges to water by those we licence, to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on receiving waters.
- 3.6 Audit local authorities on their compliance with the drinking water standards and on the operation of their wastewater treatment facilities.
- 3.7 Take enforcement action against local authorities causing water pollution by their failure to carry out their statutory environmental duties.

#### MONITORING, INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.8 Highlight water supplies and water treatment plants failing to meet the minimum standards by publishing reports on drinking water and wastewater quality. Provide recommendations for improving the quality of such supplies/schemes.
- 3.9 Meet Ireland's international obligations by preparing reports on water quality for submission to the EU and other international bodies.
- 3.10 Provide better access for the public to information on water quality and quantity in Ireland by developing an interactive, web-based water information resource, based on hydrometric, biological and chemical monitoring.

#### RESEARCH & CAPACITY-BUILDING

- 3.11 Develop the in-house capacity to undertake the analysis of dangerous substances in water as required under the Water Framework Directive.
- 3.12 Coordinate environmental research to support the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.



## GOAL 4: PROTECTED SOIL AND BIODIVERSITY 2007–2010

*“The soil of Ireland will be protected from contamination and loss and will support dependent plants and animals. Our biodiversity will be protected and managed for future generations to enjoy.”*

### THE EPA RESPONSE: 2007-2010

*Although the EPA does not have a direct role or statutory responsibility in relation to managing and protecting Ireland’s biodiversity, it will undertake a range of activities over the 2007–2010 period that will contribute to the overall objective.*

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPION

- 4.1 Finalise and publish environmental quality objectives and standards for soil.
- 4.2 Prepare a code of practice for conducting environmental risk assessment of unauthorised closed waste sites and abandoned mines.
- 4.3 Promote the conservation of biodiversity by putting in place a biodiversity team in the EPA and by preparing an action plan to ensure that our activities do not adversely impact on biodiversity.

#### LICENSING & ENFORCEMENT

- 4.4 Ensure that the activities of those we license do not have an adverse impact on biodiversity or soil, by taking these into consideration at the licensing stage.
- 4.5 Adopt a risk-based approach, in our role as regulator of genetically modified organism activities, to ensure that no harm will be caused to human health, biodiversity or the wider environment.

#### MONITORING, INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS

- 4.6 Direct the completion of a national detailed mapping of soils.
- 4.7 Update and maintain the national inventory of water-dependent protected areas, as required by the EU Water Framework Directive.
- 4.8 Update the national land cover inventory as part of a pan-European initiative, and make this available on the EPA website.
- 4.9 Publish a State of the Environment report in 2008, which will include a review of the state of Ireland’s soils and biodiversity and the priority issues that need to be addressed.

#### RESEARCH & CAPACITY-BUILDING

- 4.10 Build capacity in Ireland for undertaking biodiversity assessments.
- 4.11 Complete priority studies into the clean-up of worked-out mine sites and on landspreading of industrial waste.
- 4.12 Coordinate and publish research projects on the impacts of development and sectoral activities on biodiversity.

## GOAL 5: SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES 2007–2010

*“The overall goal is a more efficient use of resources (water, energy and materials). Waste will be prevented and minimised, with the balance safely collected, recycled or recovered. Final disposal will be completed in a way that does not harm the environment.”*

### THE EPA RESPONSE: 2007-2010

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPION

- 5.1 Implement the National Waste Prevention Programme.
- 5.2 Publish a revised national hazardous waste management plan for Ireland.

#### LICENSING & ENFORCEMENT

- 5.3 Optimise resource use and minimise waste generation at facilities licensed by the EPA, through our IPPC and waste management licensing systems.
- 5.4 Monitor facilities licensed by the EPA to check that they are in compliance with their licence conditions, and take action against those not in compliance.
- 5.5 Tackle illegal waste activities by coordinating the Environmental Enforcement Network and working collaboratively with local authorities and other agencies in Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- 5.6 Use our enforcement powers against those that do not comply with national regulations on producer responsibility, for example for waste electrical and electronic equipment, packaging waste and on the registration of hazardous substances.
- 5.7 Undertake special investigations to target illegal waste activities.

#### MONITORING, INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS

- 5.8 Aid policy-making and decision-making by compiling and publishing annual national statistics on waste generation and waste management practices.
- 5.9 Meet Ireland's international obligations by preparing national waste inventories for submission to the EU and other international bodies.
- 5.10 Continue to inform the public on waste and waste management issues by providing comprehensive web-based resources.

#### RESEARCH & CAPACITY-BUILDING

- 5.11 Assist local authorities in their waste enforcement work by providing training, support and guidance.
- 5.12 Provide funding for environmental technologies to encourage their uptake in Ireland.

## GOAL 6: INTEGRATION AND ENFORCEMENT

2007–2010

*“Environmental considerations will be at the heart of policy-making and decision-making. Responsible environmental behaviour will be the norm across all sectors of society and those who flout environmental laws will be held to account.”*

### THE EPA RESPONSE: 2007-2010

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPION

- 6.1 Continue to proactively influence policy and decision makers, by providing focussed advice, evidence-based assessments and targeted information, to ensure that the environment is placed at the heart of decision making.
- 6.2 Use strategic environmental assessment as a tool to ensure that environmental considerations are factored into plans and programmes from the beginning.
- 6.3 Continue to engender the culture of compliance at facilities licensed by the EPA, and place resources where the risks of pollution are highest.

#### LICENSING & ENFORCEMENT

- 6.4 Develop risk-based approaches to enforcement for licensed sites, historic landfill and mine remediation, and drinking water supply protection.
- 6.5 Work with other enforcement bodies both nationally and internationally to tackle serious environmental crime.
- 6.6 Prosecute those who commit serious environmental crime and encourage other regulators to do likewise.
- 6.7 Explore and deploy alternatives to court action for non-compliant licensees for lower level offences, where appropriate.
- 6.8 Tackle environmental crime and assist local authorities in their environmental enforcement activities by coordinating the Environmental Enforcement Network.
- 6.9 Promote excellent performance by local authorities in the carrying out of their environmental functions.

#### MONITORING, INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS

- 6.10 Participate in national and international fora to highlight environmental issues and encourage positive environmental outcomes.
- 6.11 Publish a State of the Environment Report in 2008 and an environmental indicators-based report in 2010 to inform policy-makers of key environmental issues.
- 6.12 Report on the performance of licensees and of local authorities.
- 6.13 Raise awareness of environmental issues and promote good environmental behaviour through:
  - a. continuing to hold an annual environmental conference bringing together the main policy-makers and decision-makers
  - b. building relationships with key stakeholders such as local communities, non-governmental organisations, the farming organisations and business groups
  - c. widely disseminating primary-level and second-level educational material
  - d. making environmental data and information available in a timely manner on the EPA website.

#### RESEARCH & CAPACITY-BUILDING

- 6.14 Coordinate and publish research to support integration and enforcement, including a project on the development of an environment / economic forecasting model.





## SECTION 3:

# BUILDING A HIGH PERFORMANCE ORGANISATION

**TIMESCALE: 2007–2010**

Developing the people and organisational resources to underpin our strategy is a continuing requirement. During the period of this plan, we will focus our efforts on four key areas.



## CONTINUING TO IMPROVE

Since its inception the EPA has continually developed and adapted to meet changing priorities, driven primarily by the needs and expectations of our stakeholders. In delivering the vision and goals outlined above, we will continue to develop our organisation and look for ways to improve. Our overarching goal continues to be the development of a world-class organisation, working smartly and efficiently, building effective partnerships and, most importantly, delivering positive environmental outcomes. We want to build on our reputation and ensure that we are seen as an organisation that has strengths in the four key areas highlighted below.





# 1. COMPETENT/COMMITTED PEOPLE

## 2007–2010



Our staff are our most important resource. Our continuing goal is to ensure that we have a committed workforce that performs to maximum ability. As a scientific organisation, we base our decisions and actions on facts and evidence. It is essential that we continue to build a depth of skills and knowledge across the organisation to help achieve our environmental goals.

Our key focus in this area to 2010 will be to:

- recruit and retain people with the depth of skills to help us deliver on our vision and goals
- give managers and staff access to high-quality professional and managerial training and the ongoing opportunity for personal development and growth
- set clear goals and manage the performance of individuals against these
- implement a mentoring and coaching programme for staff
- build on our use of cross-organisational teams so that we are working together to achieve common goals
- monitor and keep up to date with international developments in environmental protection, science, technology and research; find effective ways to transfer this learning and embed it internally
- provide a safe working environment for our staff and comply with all relevant health and safety legislation.

## 2. ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPION



The EPA wants to ensure that environmental considerations are at the heart of decision-making. We need to influence public bodies, individuals, industry, businesses and the farming community to achieve this. We need to ensure that the right information gets to the right people at the right time to inform, educate and enable effective environmental management.

Our priorities between 2007 and 2010 will be to:

- provide an independent authoritative voice stating clearly what needs to be done for the environment, and focusing beyond the immediate issues
- target our communications, information and messages to raise awareness of important environmental issues and to promote positive environmental outcomes
- influence environmental policy proactively, at national and international levels, to achieve our 2020 environmental vision and goals
- form effective partnerships and work with other public bodies to deliver shared goals on the protection of human health and the environment
- collaborate with external stakeholders who produce environmental information to ensure accuracy, integration and timely availability
- refine our web-based information resources so that we are recognised as the authoritative source of environmental information in Ireland
- set the national agenda for environmental research and development and ensure adequate funding; develop our internal research capabilities through our environmental research centre
- continue to assess and provide input to national policy developments, to ensure that environmental priorities are addressed
- lead by example by reducing the environmental impact of EPA activities and facilities.

### 3. CUSTOMER-FOCUSED

## 2007–2010



We strive to be a customer-focused organisation – recognising the fact that our role may sometimes generate conflict with some of our stakeholders. Central to this is providing clarity on our roles and activities so that customers and stakeholders are clear on what they can expect from us.

To better inform decision-makers and to influence business, the public and the organisations that we work with, we must continue to improve our communications. We need to listen to our stakeholders, communicate openly and honestly with them and ensure that we make our information and decisions meaningful, understandable and timely.

Over the 2007–2010 period we will:

- ▶ continue to deliver on the standards we have committed to in our Customer Charter
- ▶ build trust within communities, taking account of local concerns whenever possible and improving the way we interact with the public
- ▶ make clear and understandable information available through our website and our publications, and in our dealings with customers and stakeholders
- ▶ develop a range of approaches, including online channels, to allow customers to access our services easily and efficiently
- ▶ continue to anticipate customer needs and respond to changing expectations of content and service
- ▶ continue to develop and provide educational resources on the environment to inform and support our stakeholders
- ▶ measure and monitor our customer service performance, including surveying our customers
- ▶ develop and publish our plans to increase the amount of information and services we make available through Irish
- ▶ review whether we need to make key information available in other languages, to reflect the changing demographics in Ireland.



## 4. ORGANISATIONALLY EFFICIENT

## 2007–2010



As a public-sector organisation, we need to:

- ensure that we operate as efficiently and effectively as possible and provide value for money
- develop a flexible and responsive organisation, deploy our resources wisely and optimise the way we work
- continue to adopt modern approaches to regulation and minimise unnecessary administrative burdens on those we regulate.

An essential part of a well-functioning organisation is the proper use and control of its finances and other resources. We are committed to embedding good corporate governance in all areas of the organisation, in line with Government guidelines and best national and international practice.

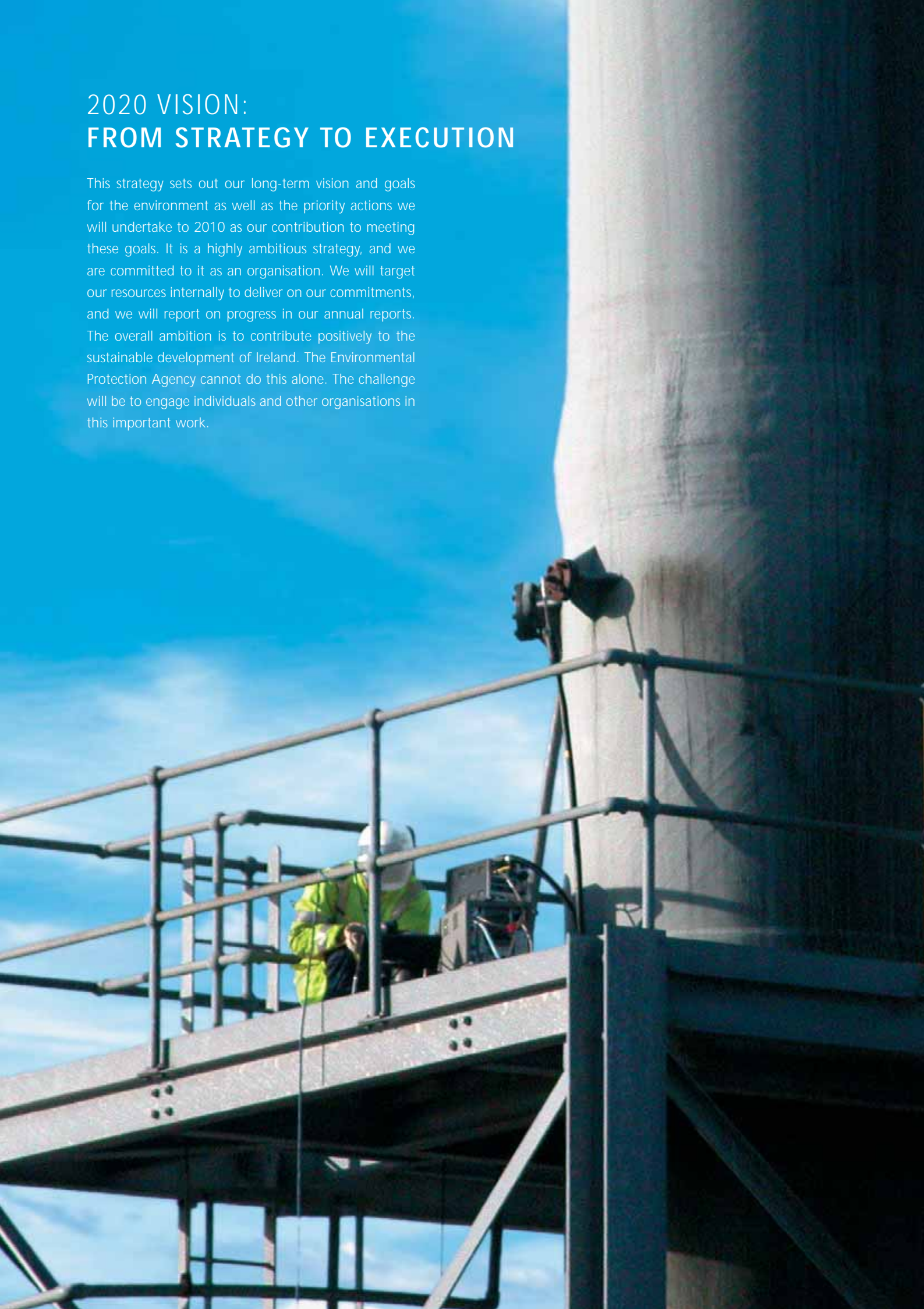
Our main priorities to 2010 will be to:

- continue to review and optimise our structure to fulfil our responsibilities and meet new challenges
- adopt a risk-based approach to enforcement, to maximise the use of our resources
- strive to continuously streamline and improve our work flows and processes and eliminate unnecessary steps; develop our staff's ability to make improvements in their local work area
- minimise the administrative burden on those we regulate, while maintaining standards and levels of compliance
- support the use of new policy instruments, including economic instruments, to deliver good environmental outcomes
- ensure that we embed best practice in corporate governance across the organisation
- continue to promote good internal communications, to optimise the way we work together as an organisation
- maximise our use of technology; ensure that information systems and resources are in place to enable staff to work efficiently and increase our capacity to deliver high-quality environmental assessments
- enable electronic transactions with our customers and with organisations we work with, in line with e-government best practice
- monitor our activities and progress in meeting our targets, continually evaluating what we do and how we can improve.



## 2020 VISION: FROM STRATEGY TO EXECUTION

This strategy sets out our long-term vision and goals for the environment as well as the priority actions we will undertake to 2010 as our contribution to meeting these goals. It is a highly ambitious strategy, and we are committed to it as an organisation. We will target our resources internally to deliver on our commitments, and we will report on progress in our annual reports. The overall ambition is to contribute positively to the sustainable development of Ireland. The Environmental Protection Agency cannot do this alone. The challenge will be to engage individuals and other organisations in this important work.



## 2020 VISION CONSULTATION

### WHAT YOU SAID AND HOW WE'VE RESPONDED

As part of the development process for our *2020 Vision*, we conducted a public consultation on the draft document. We received over 70 submissions, with the vast majority coming from the general public. In most cases, the submissions supported and reinforced the six environmental goals set out in the strategy and stated that they needed to be addressed if Ireland's environment is to be protected and enhanced for future generations.

The submissions also made specific points in relation to what was included in the strategy as well as on the implementation of the strategy. It is important to note that the *2020 Vision* has been designed as a strategy to guide the EPA, Government departments and state agencies in relation to developing and implementing policies that impact on the environment. It is not meant to be a prescriptive guide detailing individual actions for all organisations. We have however, included specific actions that the EPA will undertake.

Some submissions referred to matters that fall outside the remit of the EPA. In these cases we have sought permission from those making submissions to pass on their observations and suggestions to the relevant authority.

Outlined below are the major issues raised by the submissions and an explanation as to how we have catered for them in the strategy where possible.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

- A number of points were made in relation to changing government policy on energy use, transportation, electricity production and the promotion of renewable energy sources.
- While the strategy does address these issues in broad terms, the specific suggestions fall outside the remit of the EPA. However, we will continue to highlight these points in our interactions with the relevant Government departments and state agencies.

#### AVIATION POLLUTION

- There were a number of suggestions highlighted in relation to reducing the amount of general air travel undertaken, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In some cases, an outright ban or severe curtailment of jet travel was suggested.
- We've amended the strategy to explicitly mention aviation in the context of climate change. The more detailed suggestions will be considered as we implement the strategy or will be passed to the relevant agency or Government department.

#### NOISE

- Observations highlighted noise pollution and in particular the impact of road traffic noise.
- We adjusted the *2020 Vision* document in response to these observations by including a requirement that the national environmental noise regulations should be fully implemented and enforced.

#### FLUORIDE IN WATER

- Some submissions called for fluoridation of drinking water to be discontinued.
- Fluoridation is a matter of policy for the Department of Health and Children; it does not fall within the ambit of the EPA.

#### SOIL AND BIODIVERSITY

- The submissions broadly supported the strategy, highlighted the need to protect indigenous flora and fauna and suggested that a monitoring network for soils be put in place.
- The strategy has now been adjusted to include the establishment of a soil monitoring network, and increased emphasis was placed on preserving the diversity of local species.

## 2020 VISION CONSULTATION

### GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOs)

- There were a number of submissions that rejected GM crops and called for Ireland to be made GMO Free.
- The EPA is not responsible for policy in this area, it is in fact dictated by EU legislation, which the EPA is tasked with implementing and enforcing. This responsibility is taken extremely seriously by the EPA and where a licence for a field trial is granted, the most stringent conditions are attached.

### WASTE MANAGEMENT

- Observations centred around the need to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, to increase the quantities being recycled, and emphasising prevention. Arguments were made against incineration as a waste management methodology. The need to rely on waste management technologies that are higher on the waste management hierarchy was highlighted. The management of litter was identified as a concern.
- The strategy already addresses the issue of prevention, recycling and better resource management. The need to address the littering problem has been included under Goal 5 "Sustainable Use of Resources". The use of incineration as a waste management methodology is part of a Government policy that the EPA is responsible for implementing to the highest international standards.

### ENFORCEMENT

- A number of submissions referred to the need to ensure that there is proper monitoring and regulation of licensed facilities and that enforcement action is proactive in improving environmental standards. It was stated that the

number of EPA monitoring visits and audits of licensed facilities had dropped between 2004 and 2005. Other submissions suggested that the EPA should consider alternatives to court action, such as administrative sanctions.

- The OEE enforces EPA licences in a structured and comprehensive manner. An annual programme of inspections is developed on the basis of the potential risk that the licensed site poses to the environment and/or its compliance history. The methodology has been compiled based on international best practice and it comprises five key elements, namely an assessment of the complexity of activities, the emissions, the location, the environmental performance and the sensitivity of the receiving environment of each licensed facility. This ensures that resources are always deployed to sites with the highest risk or the greatest problems, with a view to balancing incentive-based enforcement and legal action.

The figures quoted regarding inspections and audit visits do not take into account the significant resources invested in compliance meetings, which totalled 217 in 2006, or indeed the ongoing consolidation of monitoring that takes place as compliance improves. Compliance meetings are held with licensees to secure senior management commitment to corrective actions and improved environmental performance. These meetings have in many cases been more effective than audits.

### INCLUSION

- There should be greater involvement of communities and individuals in environment decision and policy-making processes.
- We have amended the strategy in light of these observations. There is now a specific reference to the need to fully implement EU legislation in this area, to ensure communities and individuals are more involved in the process.

## 2020 VISION CONSULTATION

### PLANNING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Some submissions highlighted the need for the wider involvement of the EPA in the assessment of Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) and in the preparation of county development plans.
- The EPA is already involved in the assessment of some EISs (for those facilities that apply for an EPA licence) and it has issued guidance on preparing an EIS. Furthermore, for major plans and programmes, it has a role in strategic environmental assessment, and, as we state in our strategy, we aim to use this role to ensure environmental considerations are factored into plans and programmes from the beginning.

### EPA STRUCTURE

- Concern was expressed around the structure and membership of the EPA Board and its Advisory Committee.
- Any changes to the process for appointing Directors and members of the Advisory Committee would require legislative change and is beyond the remit of the EPA. As well as meeting with members of the Advisory Committee, the EPA has put in place a system of regular meetings with environmental NGOs, through the Environmental (Ecological) NGOs Core Funding Ltd. Secretariat, to ensure that we hear the issues and concerns of these stakeholders.

### EPA REGULATORY PROCESSES

- Some submissions stressed the need for a reduction in the administrative burden on those regulated by the EPA and to ensure that there is transparent, consistent and fair regulation to meet the needs of modern companies. The need for a Regulatory Impact Assessment of EPA licensing processes was highlighted. One submission recommended that a full-sector competitive analysis be conducted on the impact of achieving the environmental goals of this strategy.
- The strategy already includes an action in relation to minimising the administrative burden on those we regulate, while maintaining standards and levels of compliance. Regulatory Impact Assessments are normally conducted on new legislation and are initiated by the relevant Government department.

Some concern was expressed with how we have dealt with our various customers in the past. The strategy commits to nine separate priority actions over coming years to ensure we become a more customer-focused organisation. These include building closer relationships with communities affected by our decisions; making information on the environment more easily understood and accessible and developing educational resources.

A number of submissions also encouraged us to play our role as environmental champion, as the strategy outlines. We have included activities under each of the six environmental goals that the EPA must undertake as our part in meeting this challenge. We will also encourage every Government department, public and private body, commercial and non-profit organisation and member of the public to play their part.



## LIST OF SUBMISSIONS

### Submissions were received from the following:

- An Taisce - The National Trust for Ireland
- Mr Bob Allen
- Mr John Baldwin
- Mr Dick Barton
- Ms Josephine Brady
- Ms Ruth Bullough
- Cllr Caroline Burrell
- Carrigaline for a Safe Environment (CASE)
- Confederation of European Waste-to-Energy Plant (CEWEP) Ireland
- Cork Environmental Alliance
- Cork Harbour Alliance for a Safe Environment (CHASE)
- Mr George Corrigan
- Dr Elizabeth Cullen, Irish Doctors' Environmental Association
- Mr Malcolm Doak
- Ms Francesca Doonan
- Ms Carole Douglas
- Dublin 15 Community Council
- Mr William T G Dunne
- Mr Kevin Dwyer
- Mr Michael P Farrell
- Mr Peter Fegan
- Forest Friends Ireland/Cáirde na Coille
- Friends of the Irish Environment
- Mrs Natasha Harty
- Mr John Higginbotham
- Mr Charles Henry
- Mr Vinny Hyland
- Indaver Ireland
- Ms Susan Iremonger
- Irish Apple Growers' Association
- Irish Branch Association for Petroleum and Explosives Administration
- Irish Business and Employers' Confederation
- Irish Dairy Industries Association
- Irish Farmers Association
- Ms Breeda Kelly
- Ms Breda Kenny
- Kinsale Environment Watch
- Mr Warren Lawless
- Ms Angela Lawton
- Mr Niall Leahy
- Mr David A Lillie
- Mr Michael Lynch
- Mr Paul Lynch
- Mr Eoin MacDonagh
- Mr Patrick Mangan
- Mr D Mayer
- Ms Helen McCauley
- Mr Drew McDowell
- J McLay
- Mr Mark Mellett
- Ms Dorothy Molony
- Mr Kevin Mooney
- Monkstown, Glenbrook, Passage Branch of CHASE
- Ms Mary Montaut
- Mountaineering Council of Ireland
- Mr Christophe Mouze
- Mr James T Power
- Mr John Quinn
- Repak Limited
- Ms Helen Riordan
- Mr Brian Rickwood
- Mr James Rountree
- Mr Tim Ryan
- Ms Brigitte Schorn
- Dr Emer Shelley
- Ms Sorcha Taylor
- Mr David Toohey
- Mr Tomas Tyner
- Mr Dariusz Walczak
- Westmeath Environmental Group
- Ms Cathy Wilde







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