

EU Policy Review

Analysis of recent EU legislation and policy for local and regional government

Number 3/05 – April-May 2005

Produced by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA)
in association with the Irish Regions Office (IRO)

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For further information on these issues, or if you would like to receive copies of any of the documents mentioned, please contact Mark Callanan at the IPA ([01] 240 3632 or email mcallanan@ipa.ie)

LEGISLATION

ECJ rules on Complaints over Waste Management in Ireland

The EU Waste Framework Directive

The European Court of Justice delivered its ruling in April 2005 on a high-profile case dealing with a number of complaints concerning waste management in Ireland.

The case concerns the implementation in Ireland of the EU's Waste Framework Directive (Directive 75/442/EEC as amended by Directive 91/156/EEC), which lays down basic rules for handling waste. The Directive, as amended, established a requirement to coordinate the management of waste within the EU to limit waste production. Amongst other things, national governments must ensure that the disposal and recovery of waste does not present a risk to water, air, soil, plants and animals – in this regard, they must prohibit unauthorised waste activities and control waste facilities by issuing permits for those involved in the disposal or recovery of waste, and keeping a registration system for organisations which collect or transport waste. Those involved in waste management activities must also keep a record of all the details of their operations (the quantity, nature and origin of the waste) and be subject to periodic inspections.

The Directive also requires national governments to promote the prevention, reuse and recycling of waste, as well as the preparation of waste management plans providing for the establishment of a network of disposal facilities and infrastructure, taking into account best available technologies. This has obliged local authorities to prepare, adopt and implement, either individually or in conjunction

with other local authorities, waste management plans for their area. The principal legislation for bringing the Directives into effect in Irish law has been the Waste Management Act 1996, along with subsequent amendments in 2001 and 2003, and a wide range of statutory instruments and regulations.

The Areas Where Complaints Were Made

The European Commission brought the case against Ireland after investigation of complaints made between 1997 and 2000 revealed compliance problems. The judgement refers in considerable detail to complaints of illegal dumping and older unlicensed local authority landfills in several areas, including:

- ❑ Construction and demolition waste in wetlands in Limerick city;
- ❑ Organic waste in lagoons at Ballard, Fermoy, Co. Cork;
- ❑ Various types of waste at Pembrokestown, Whiterock Hill, Co. Wexford;
- ❑ Municipal landfill at Powerstown, Co. Carlow;
- ❑ Waste and rubble in a green area on the Poolbeg peninsula, Dublin;
- ❑ Two municipal landfills, one at Tramore and one at Kilbarry, Co. Waterford;
- ❑ Waste in disused quarries at Lea Road and Ballymorris, Portarlinton, Co. Laois;
- ❑ Municipal landfills at Drumnaboden, Muckish and Glenalla, Co. Donegal;
- ❑ Waste storage at Cullinagh, Fermoy, Co. Cork;
- ❑ Construction and demolition waste on the foreshore at Carlingford Lough, Greenore, Co. Louth;
- ❑ Unlicensed waste collection in Bray, Co. Wicklow;
- ❑ Construction and demolition and other types of waste in wetlands located at Ballynattin, Pickardstown, Ballygunner Bog and Castletown, Co. Waterford.

The Court's 38-page judgement details the arguments used by the Commission in each of the 12 cases above, and the arguments presented by the Irish government in defence. If readers would like a full copy of the judgement, please email mcallanan@ipa.ie

However, the Commission also stated that the 12 cases cited did not constitute the only cases of non-compliance with the Directive, and that it reserved the right to cite other examples in order to illustrate the breaches of a general nature.

The Arguments Presented

The Commission contended that illegal waste sites in several parts of the country were not being subject to effective enforcement action and clean-up. The Commission argued that in those instances where court action was taken against illegal operators, the penalties imposed were usually very low, when compared to the

potential illicit profits to be made. This effectively penalised competitors who comply with the legislation.

The Commission pointed to the serious delays in the EPA licensing process for local authority landfills, and capacity problems with the overall waste disposal network. Overall, the Commission's conclusion was that there was a culture of tolerating the operation of unlicensed waste disposal and recovery facilities in Ireland.

In representing the case for Ireland, the government cast doubt on the truth of numerous facts alleged by the Commission, on the basis of its investigation of the complaints it received. The Government has also contended that the Commission is not justified in drawing general conclusions from the examination of these specific complaints by presuming alleged systemic failures in Ireland to comply with the Waste Framework Directive. It pointed to numerous notices being issued and prosecutions being undertaken by local authorities under the Waste Management Act 1996.

The Court's Findings

The Court ruled that the lack of an effective permit system for waste undertakings in Ireland until relatively recently was a breach of the Directive, which has in addition led to other general and persistent breaches.

In particular, the Court ruled that Ireland did not meet its obligation, by which it has been bound since 1977, to ensure that all local authority landfills hold a permit as required by the Directive. National legislation to give effect to the Directive was adopted extremely late. The government's argument that the implementation of a permit system required a transitional period to allow existing municipal facilities to remain operational was dismissed.

The Court also found that the permit procedure was slow (taking 808 days on average and sometimes almost four years) and there was a lack of appropriate measures for ensuring that facilities were promptly made subject to the domestic system finally set up.

The Court felt that the Irish government, in its defence, had not presented adequate proof to counter the claims and evidence presented by the Commission. Given the specific breaches cited by the Commission and the photographic evidence presented, the judgement of the Court was that "a number of Irish local authorities have displayed tolerance towards unauthorised operations relating to significant quantities of waste in numerous places in Ireland, often over very long periods, failing to take appropriate measures to ensure that such operations ceased and were effectively punished and to prevent their recurrence ... This tolerant approach is indicative of a large-scale administrative problem". The Court found that such a failure to fulfil obligations was general and persistent in nature.

The Court acknowledged the existing problem of waste management capacity in Ireland, that existing facilities are close to saturation point, and that this development has been accompanied by the appearance of a number of illegal dumps. The Court's judgement states that "The same finding is made in a document entitled 'National Waste Management Strategy', submitted to the Irish Government in January 2002 by the Institution of the Engineers of Ireland, which points out that hundreds if not thousands of illegal dumps are scattered across Ireland". The judgement also cites a 2001 report from Wicklow County Council which estimated that there were

close to 100 illegal sites in that county alone, some of them of a considerable size and containing hazardous waste.

In addition, the Court argued that it is logical to assume that because there had not been an effective permit system in place, and that unauthorised activities had been tolerated, Ireland had also breached other obligations of the Directive. These include its responsibility to ensure the disposal or recovery of waste without risk to public health and the environment, the establishment of an integrated and adequate network for waste disposal, and the inspection of waste holders and of operators dealing with waste – the Court argued that these are possible only within the framework of an effective permit system.

Following Up on the Ruling and DEHLG Policy Direction on Illegal Dumping

The Commission welcomed the Court's ruling in April, and commented that in order to comply with the judgment, illegal sites in various locations around the country will need to be properly cleaned up. The Commission also argued that it must also become clear that there is a real economic deterrent to carrying out illegal waste activities.

In its response to the ruling, the DEHLG argued that since the period covered by the complaints, Ireland's waste management regulatory regime has been brought up to modern EU standards. In addition, the government pointed to major progress being made on the ground in modernising waste infrastructure and services, including in the area of enforcement (notably through the establishment of the Office of Environmental Enforcement (OEE) and the national enforcement network). The Department claims that over 110 additional staff have been recruited to ensure waste legislation is properly enforced. All existing local authority waste disposal sites are now subject to an EPA licence, there has been an increase in the number of bring banks and recycling centres, while the municipal recycling rate has increased from 9% when the Commission initiated the complaints to the current rate of 28%. In the area of waste disposal, estimated remaining landfill capacity is now 10 years, compared to 6 years in 2001.

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Dick Roche TD, stated that he wanted to be in a position to demonstrate that local authorities, which have responsibility for enforcement at a local level, will ensure that breakdowns of this type do not reoccur.

A specific response to the ruling came in May 2005, with the issuing of a policy direction by circular to local authorities and the EPA under section 60 of the Waste Management Act 1996. The policy direction addressed the ways for dealing with illegal waste deposits, and those responsible for criminal activity in waste.

Under its terms, local authorities are directed to draw up an inventory and risk assessment of all non-licensed closed landfills where disposal or recovery activities have taken place, if necessary as part of their current review of their waste management plans.

The direction states that when illegal waste activity is discovered, the waste must be recovered or disposed of, in the shortest practicable time, without endangering the environment or human health. The scale and seriousness of the situation should be assessed as quickly as possible and adequate management and monitoring put in place. In particular, all hazardous waste which is detected must be removed and recyclable material must be removed unless it

can be shown that there are alternative environmentally sustainable options.

The document directs that certain sites should at all times be remediated, such as:

- ❑ Lands near to existing or planned residential development or educational facilities (except where it is shown that alternative solutions provide greater protection to the environment and health);
- ❑ Wetlands;
- ❑ Natural Heritage Areas, candidate Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas; and
- ❑ Places of special interest such as high amenity areas.

Certain arrangements must be made when it is considered appropriate to leave waste in place, including carrying out a risk assessment, and making applications for a permit or licence, and the EPA are to elaborate on this in future guidance.

The policy direction echoes the Commission's sentiments by noting that those waste management service providers who abide by the law do so at considerable cost, and should not be put at a competitive disadvantage by illegal operators. Thus prosecutions against offenders should have regard to the elimination of the economic benefit deriving from the illegal activity, and therefore, regulatory bodies should seek the maximum potential sanctions available in law. Under the terms of the policy direction, local authorities "should, where practicable, pursue civil remedies against illegal operators under the provisions of sections 55 to 58 of the Act to, for example, seek to recover the costs of measures taken to prevent or limit environmental pollution caused by the waste".

Some estimates have put the number of municipal sites at almost 300 – a full audit is to be overseen by the OEE to identify those that pose an environmental threat. The cost of remediating closed unlicensed municipal landfills will be very high, to say nothing of illegal sites. One local authority has estimated the cost of landfill remediation for one old municipal dump at €23 million. In the last 2 years, the County and City Managers' Association has raised the issue of financing landfill remediation with the DEHLG a number of times.

The policy direction also addresses the movement of waste. These provisions are intended to address concerns that authorities were taking an unnecessarily restrictive approach over the inter-regional movement of waste. While the document notes that the proximity principle is an important element of waste management policy, this should not entail interpreting administrative waste management planning boundaries in a manner which would "inhibit the development of waste infrastructure which will support the attainment of national waste management policy objectives".

The Minister has also stated his intention to lead a team at senior level from both the Department and local authority management to Brussels to establish a closer working relationship with Commission officials on environmental issues.

The Commission, for its part, acknowledged that more recent developments have improved the situation, including more constructive contacts with Irish officials, the establishment of the OEE in 2003 to ensure effective cooperation between enforcement bodies, and a more structured approach to dealing with illegal waste activities

and responding to complaints from citizens about waste enforcement. Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas, commenting on the ruling said the Commission was "ready to work constructively with the Irish authorities to address the necessary follow-up to the judgement."

Nitrates Saga Trundles On

How We Got Here

The seemingly never-ending discussion over the implementation of the 1991 Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) continues, with the latest instalment in April 2005. The ball in this lengthy game of tennis has been batted back and forth a number of times between the EU and the Irish government over many years (see for example *Local Authority Bulletin on Europe* for December 2001 – January 2002).

The European Court of Justice ruled in March 2004 that Ireland was not compliant with the Directive, in particular by not submitting a National Action Plan on Nitrates to Brussels as required by the legislation. Following this ruling, the Commission began proceedings to have fines imposed on Ireland, and also suggested the prospect of withholding a proportion of the EU's financing for single farm payments under the reformed CAP system. This seems to have concentrated minds on this politically sensitive issue, and the need to devise an Action Plan acceptable to Brussels has been seen as increasingly important.

Two drafts of the National Action Plan (NAP) on Nitrates were published in December 2003 and July 2004, before a third draft was formally submitted to Brussels in October 2004. Following over a hundred submissions from farm organisations and co-ops, local authorities, environmental groups, fisheries and angler organisations and other interests on the earlier drafts, it was clear that there were significant differences of opinion on a number of matters, including issues such as:

- ❑ The capacity of farm waste storage facilities;
- ❑ Closed periods of time, during which landspreading is prohibited; and
- ❑ Buffer zones from water courses, specifying that spreading of fertilizers and manure may not take place at all within certain distances from water bodies.

More stringent rules are to apply in some counties over others, based on climate, grass growing seasons, soil conditions and other scientific considerations.

The government appointed Denis Brosnan, former chairman of Kerry Group, to meet with different stakeholders and make compromise proposals, which were incorporated into the text submitted to the Commission in October 2004.

However, the Commission replied in December that the submitted version did not fully meet the requirements of the Directive. The Government in April 2005 made some further changes to the draft document, which go a long way to meeting the Commission's requirements.

Changes to Zoning of Different Counties

The amendments involve a change in the zoning of counties for the purposes of identifying minimum required storage capacity, and closed periods for spreading

fertilizers and slurry. The new zones currently proposed in the April 2005 draft are as follows:

Zone A	Zone B	Zone C
Carlow	Clare	Cavan
Cork	Galway	Monaghan
Dublin	Kerry	Donegal
Kildare	Limerick	Leitrim
Kilkenny	Longford	
Laois	Louth	
Offaly	Mayo	
Tipperary (Nth and Sth)	Meath	
Waterford	Roscommon	
Wexford	Sligo	
Wicklow	Westmeath	

Minimum Storage Requirements

The manure storage requirements for farms in counties in zone A remains unchanged. However, the storage capacities required for farms in zones B and C have been increased by 2 weeks compared to the draft programme submitted in October 2004.

The following minimum storage requirements have been outlined in the April 2005 proposal to the Commission:

- Counties in Zone A – 16 weeks
- Counties in Zone B – 18 weeks
- Counties in Zone C – 22 weeks

The DEHLG is understood to be considering whether it is more appropriate to require 2 weeks lesser storage for farms in Donegal and Leitrim, and making this case to Brussels.

In the case of intensive pig and poultry units requiring an IPC licence, all such holdings (regardless of zone) will require 26 weeks storage capacity. However, the government is to seek to have small pig and poultry units exempted from this 26 weeks storage requirement, and holds that a lesser storage capacity (similar to the storage capacity requirements for manure in general) would be appropriate and would provide an adequate level of environmental protection.

There has been some indication from the Department of Agriculture and Food that there may be additional grant aid for storage facilities for those required to store nitrates for up to 22 weeks (such as farms in Cavan, Monaghan, Leitrim and Donegal under the current proposals)

'Closed Periods' When Spreading is Prohibited

The 'closed periods' when spreading of organic fertilizers is prohibited have also been increased, in zone A by 17 days, and in zone B by 7 days. The April 2005 proposals set out new closed periods for different parts of the country are as follows:

- Counties in Zone A – 8th October to 12th January
- Counties in Zone B – 8th October to 15th January
- Counties in Zone C – 1st October to 31st January

The proposed closed periods for application of chemical fertilizers and farmyard manure have also been amended.

Buffer Zones Near Watercourses

The April 2005 proposal to the Commission states that buffer zones will be 10 metres from a watercourse in the case of organic fertilizers, and 1.5 metres from a watercourse in the case of chemical fertilizers. Specific

provisions are proposed to deal with buffer zones within narrow parcels of land – the proposal states that the 10-metre buffer zone will be reduced to a 5-metre buffer zone where the area adjacent to flowing waters has an average incline of less than 10% towards the watercourse, reduced to 3 metres where the peripheral adjoining area is a narrow parcel not exceeding one hectare and not more than 50 metres in width, or the watercourse is a drainage ditch.

The Brosnan report noted that some submissions highlighted the fact that there is no reference made to surface waters such as lakes and rivers used as a source of drinking water, which is an important source of drinking water supplies in some parts of the country. In addition, it was unclear whether the reference to boreholes is to boreholes used for the abstraction of drinking water generally, or for the abstraction of drinking water for public supplies. The report stated that greater clarity may be needed to take account of surface waters used as a drinking water source – where larger buffer zones would be required. It also stated that provision could be made for distances from boreholes to be agreed locally between farmers and local authorities, as local authorities have responsibility for this area.

Amounts and Method of Spreading

The report also recommended that the maximum amounts of livestock manure, farmyard manure, and other organic fertilizers that could be applied to land at any one time in the original drafts were somewhat excessive, and could be tantamount to permitting the dumping of slurry. The October 2004 draft amended the text to allow for the spreading of a maximum of up to 30,000 litres per hectare of livestock manure and organic fertilizers, and up to 60,000 litres of soiled water per hectare at any one time, as well as providing for a minimum of 42 days between applications.

The Brosnan report also recommended that the use of 'umbilical chord' equipment, which under the wrong conditions is open to misuse, should not be permitted *nationwide* during the longer closed period, and this was also reflected in the October 2004 draft. These provisions seem unchanged by the April 2005 proposals to the Commission.

Local Authorities and the Department of Agriculture and Food

The October 2004 stated that the Department of Agriculture and Food (DAF) would be responsible for on-farm inspections regarding compliance with the Nitrates Directive. However, it also stated that the farm holdings to be inspected by the Department of Agriculture (1% of farms in the area, and 5% of derogation holdings) will be selected by the relevant local authority, taking account of the risk to water quality. The October text also stated that it would be appropriate for the relevant local authorities in each River Basin District to co-ordinate their activities in this regard, in consultation with other authorities such as the regional fisheries boards, with a view to ensuring maximum consistency and support for measures being pursued for water quality management.

Once inspections are carried out, the results would then be communicated by the DAF to the local authority, which would be free to then submit observations on these results to the DAF. This would not affect the right of local authorities, in their role as water protection bodies, to investigate complaints and monitor compliance with

regulations under existing national legislation and EU Directives.

The October draft also states that advisory groups will also be established at county level comprising representatives of the farming community, Teagasc and local authorities to advise on and address issues in relation to implementation of the Nitrates Directive. These provisions of the October draft are not affected by the changes introduced in April 2005.

National Implementation of the Energy Efficiency in Buildings Directive

A draft Action Plan to implement the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive in Ireland has been published for consultation. This Directive (2002/91/EC) requires new buildings, and existing buildings that are subject to property transactions (sale or letting) to have an energy certificate available for prospective buyers or tenants at the point of sale or rental. This applies equally to residential and non-residential buildings, although national governments may exempt certain types of buildings (such as those of historical or architectural importance, or religious buildings) from the provisions.

The draft Action Plan, drawn up by a group representative of the DEHLG and the Department for Communications, Marine & Natural Resources (DCMNR), estimates that some 170,000 sale or rental transactions will require energy certificates each year. This figure includes an estimated 10,000 lettings or re-lettings of local authority and voluntary housing rented dwellings.

For new buildings over 1,000m², the feasibility of alternative energy measures must be considered. The Building Code is to be amended to require evidence of compliance with this provision to be submitted with the commencement notice to the local building control authority before works commence. For existing buildings of this size that are undergoing renovation, energy performance must be upgraded as far as is technically and economically feasible. For new buildings over 1,000m² occupied by public bodies, an energy certificate must be posted in a prominent place.

The Directive is due to come into effect in January 2006, and national legislation must be adopted to give effect to its provisions by this time. However, national governments may defer implementation of the requirements on energy performance certificates, inspection of boilers of air conditioners until January 2009. This will allow for the development of suitable energy rating systems and certification schemes for buildings, as well as the training of personnel to undertake the energy performance assessments, and equipment and systems inspections. The draft Action Plan mentions one possibility that up to 100 local authority staff could become registered as assessors.

The closing date for submissions on the draft Action Plan is **29th July 2005**. The DEHLG is to be responsible for drafting the national legislation to give effect to the Directive. A copy of the draft Action Plan is available at:

http://www.sei.ie/content/content.asp?section_id=1424

POLICY INITIATIVES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Quality of Bathing Water in Ireland Remains High

In May, the EPA published its report on bathing water quality in Ireland for 2004, to coincide with the release of EU-wide figures. The report shows a 98% compliance rate with mandatory EU standards under the EU Bathing Water Directive (76/160/EC), which according to the EPA attests to the continuing high quality of Ireland's bathing waters and the positive impact of investment by local authorities in wastewater treatment facilities.

The report covers beaches and inland bathing areas in Clare, Cork county, Donegal, Dublin city, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown, Fingal, Galway county and city, Kerry, Leitrim, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Sligo, Waterford county, Westmeath, Wexford, and Wicklow.

Local authorities are responsible for sampling (or arranging for the sampling) of waters for bathing waters for which they are responsible, as well as investigating the conditions which can affect the quality of bathing waters. A total of 131 bathing areas, both seawater and freshwater, were monitored throughout the 2004 bathing season under the Directive.

They were assessed for compliance with two sets of EU standards as well as national standards as follows:

- ❑ Minimum quality standards (the EU Mandatory Values);
- ❑ More stringent quality targets (the EU Guide Values);
- ❑ Additional parameters set by Ireland (National Limit Values) to examine areas such as water colour, transparency, faecal streptococci and dissolved oxygen.

The key findings of the EPA's report are that:

- ❑ 128 of the 131 bathing areas (98 %) complied with the minimum standards laid down under EU legislation, an increase on the 127 bathing areas that complied in 2003;
- ❑ 115 of the 131 bathing areas (88 %) complied with the much stricter EU guideline standards, again representing an increase on the 111 bathing areas that complied in 2003;
- ❑ 99 of the 131 of bathing areas (76%) complied with the more extensive National Limit Values, a drop on the 102 bathing areas that complied in 2003.

The EPA points out that a number of bathing water areas in the Dublin area have experienced an improvement in bathing water quality since 2002 – it attributes this improvement to a large extent to the commissioning of the new wastewater treatment facility at Ringsend in Dublin, which has significantly reduced the quantity of partly-treated or untreated sewage entering the greater Dublin Bay area. The bathing areas that showed the most notable water quality improvement were Malahide, Portmarnock, and Dollymount.

The three bathing areas that failed to comply with the mandatory EU standards were Skerries and Balbriggan in Fingal, and Dunmore East, Main Strand in county Waterford. The planned construction of a number of new waste water treatment plants including proposed plants for Balbriggan/ Skerries and Dunmore East should, when operational, prevent untreated waste-water being discharged into the sea and therefore reduce the risk of bathing water compliance failures occurring.

Many of the sites which failed the national standards did so on physio-chemical parameters such as transparency, colour and dissolved oxygen which are not considered for EU compliance. The high number of such failures were most likely due to the presence of a red/orange coloured algal bloom which was reported along the southern coast in July.

According to the EPA, the results show that “Irish bathing water quality compares very favourably with other EU member states”.

The report also notes the proposal to amend the 1976 Bathing Water Directive, which will introduce tougher quality standards than the existing legislation (see *Local Authority Bulletin on Europe* for October – November 2002). This proposal is expected to be adopted this year. As the report comments, this is likely to result in “some decrease in Ireland’s current high level of compliance under the current Bathing Water Directive”. The European Parliament has sought to have the provisions of the new Bathing Water Directive extended to cover recreational waters, such as boating lakes and canoeing facilities – national governments and local authority representatives have argued that such an extension would be impractical, as the cost of monitoring would be disproportionate to the risks involved.

A copy of the EPA’s report on the results for Ireland is available at:

http://www.epa.ie/NewsCentre/ReportsPublications/Water/FileUpload_6316.en.PDF

A summary of the results for all EU countries can be accessed at:

http://www.europa.eu.int/water/water-bathing/rep_downl.html

Best Practice in Local Environmental Awareness and Communication

The Commission recently published a study into effective environmental communication. The report highlights the pivotal role that local authorities play in raising environmental awareness and changing behaviour amongst the public, including children.

The study looks at 20 examples of best practice and success stories from a range of countries across Europe, and provides recommendations for local authorities developing an environmental communication strategy. Some of the key points are that environmental communication:

- Should educate, mobilise, and respond to the general public;

- Should be presented in a format, style and language that is accessible and attractive to the general public;
- Should stress concrete solutions and provide practical support;
- Requires a partnership between local and regional authorities, NGOs, business, and the media.

The study identifies a number of problems or barriers typically encountered, including the use of ‘jargon’, terminology and abstract terms. It points out that even in environmentally conscious Germany, the word ‘sustainability’ is only understood by 13% of the population. Too many information campaigns are expert-driven, providing interesting information to the informed and already converted, but little use to the public at large. Communication approaches to the public need to make such concepts tangible. Psychologists conclude that messages that stress ‘doom and gloom’ scenarios will not get people to recycle more, drive less, conserve energy, or make other behavioural changes – in general the ‘doom and gloom’ approach is likely to be less effective than approaches that also offer practical support and real solutions to everyday problems.

A copy of the report is available at:

http://www.cameronsds.com/portfolio/communication/env_com/

New Study into Biological Treatment to Extend Landfill Capacity

In March, a new report was published reviewing the various types of mechanical-biological waste treatment systems. The report reviews the benefits and limitations of the many variants of this approach to waste treatment, and analyses the suitability of such systems for managing residual household waste.

The report reviews some 27 different types of mechanical-biological treatment of household waste plants in 9 countries. It finds that such approaches could make a difference for local authorities seeking to meet targets under the Landfill Directive (99/31/EC) to reduce the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill. The report finds that the technology has considerable potential for local authorities in countries like Ireland, Britain, Greece, and Italy, which are under pressure to divert biodegradable waste from landfill, and where there is strong public opposition to incineration.

A copy of the report can be accessed at:

http://www.assurre.org/Innovation_and_technology/Mechanical-Biological_Treatment.aspx

Mark Callanan
 E: mcallanan@ipa.ie
 Tel: +353 1 240 3632

Institute of Public Administration
 57–61 Lansdowne Road
 Dublin 4
 Ireland

Tel: +353 1 240 3600
 Tel: 1890 202 626 (LoCall)
 Fax: +353 1 668 9135