

Minutes of Meeting of the Environmental Protection and Agriculture Strategic Policy Committee held on Thursday 28th May 2026 at 11 a.m. in the Council Chamber

Members in attendance:

Cllr. Karey McHugh Farag, Cathaoirleach
Cllr. James Charity
Cllr. Geraldine Donohue
Cllr. Andrew Reddington
Cllr. Cillian Keane
Ms. Elaine Murphy
Ms. Karina Finn
Mr. Kevin O'Crowley
Mr. Noel Finnegan

Oifigigh I láthair:

Ms. Eileen Ruane, Director of Services
Ms. Ann Dolan, Senior Executive Scientist
Mr. Mike Melody, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. Mary McGann, Administrative Officer
Ms. Nuala Quinton, Senior Staff Officer
Mr. Aidan Cunningham, Staff Officer
Mr. Mark Molloy, Assistant Environmental Awareness Officer
Mr. Felix Chimedza, Assistant Staff Officer

Í láthair freisin:

Mr. Francis Deery, LAWPRO
Mr. Peter Mitchell, LAWPRO
Mr. Luke Drea, LAWPRO

1. Confirmation of Minutes of Meeting of the Environment Protection and Agriculture SPC held on Thursday 23rd April 2026.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April 2026 were proposed by Cllr. Donohue and seconded by Mr. Ó'Crowley.

Matters Arising from the Minutes:

Mr O'Crowley noted that LAWPRO were present at the meeting to make a presentation on foot of his request at the previous meeting.

Cllr. Donohue enquired regarding treatment of domestic households under Waste Presentation Byelaws where they could not avail of a waste collection service. In response, Ms. Dolan noted that the bye laws stipulate that the household should have at least one of the following:

- domestic waste collection service
- proof they are taking waste to a Civic Amenity Site, in the form of receipts
- a signed bin sharing agreement with another household

2. Presentation by LAWPRO on Water Framework Directive Water Quality Classifications.

Cllr. McHugh Farag welcomed the three staff members from LAWPRO and invited them to make a presentation on water quality classifications under the Water Framework Directive.

Mr. Deery informed the members of LAWPRO's four core main functions:

- Coordination on behalf of local authorities and public bodies through 5 Regional Committees including cross border representation.
- Catchment science and management to inform decision making by working in Priority Areas for Action (PAA) identified in their plans and building capacity within Local Authority sector through knowledge sharing and training.
- Community engagement at a local level and nationwide
- Innovative solutions through the farming for Water EIP and Nature Bases Solution Programmes.

Mr. Deery updated members on the 3 items that determine water quality:

- Ecological Status or Potential:
 - biological quality elements such as. macroinvertebrates, phytoplankton, aquatic plants, phytobenthos, fish;
 - physiochemical elements such as nutrients, oxygen, pH;
 - Hydromorphological elements such as flow, morphology, barriers.
- Chemical Status:
 - Surface waters – priority substances
 - Groundwaters- nitrates, pesticides, other groundwater pollutants
- Quantitative Status:
 - water balance, dependent surface and terrestrial ecosystems and saline intrusion.

Mr. Deery noted that the EPA determine the water quality status rating attributed to water bodies, and noted the key determinants for different types of water bodies:

- Rivers: in most cases biological factors, although in 9 rivers hydromorphological conditions are driving ecological status.
- Lakes: Mr. Deery noted that the 3-year average for total phosphorus in Corrib Upper & Lower does not exceed 10 ug/l P and that fish and more recently plants are determining ecological status.

He noted that status rankings are high, good, moderate, poor or bad with the overall status of surface water determined by the poorer of ecological and chemical status whereas overall status of groundwaters are ranked either good or poor. Mr. Deery noted that the status of the Corrib Catchment has been broadly stable in the monitored surface water bodies with 3 High Status objective waterbodies deteriorating between the monitoring period 2016 – 2021 to 2019 – 2024. Mr. Derry noted that this compares favourably with the national story of declines.

Mr. Deery concluded by noting that the EPA is now characterising the next programme by updating and refining the evidence base for ecological and chemical status and other monitoring information and pressures on waterbodies.

Cllr. McHugh Farag thanked Mr. Deery for the very detailed presentation and expressed appreciation for making themselves available to present on water quality classifications at the request of the SPC Members.

Cllr. Donohue noted that many water courses were historically keep clean manually through the work of local groups and Towns Group, however, in recent times many culverts, streams and rivers were becoming choked with all types of waste including plastics. Cllr. Donohue noted that more resources needed to be made available to the Area Offices to assist with ongoing clearance and maintenance of local watercourses, which would assist the ongoing work of local groups such as Tidy Towns.

Cllr. Donohue noted that septic tank grants were only available to people living within particular high-pressure zones and enquired whether LAWPRO had any role in the provision of funding for householders who were financially disadvantaged or required assistance with these applications. Cllr. McHugh Farag supported this proposal for broadening of septic tank grants and Cllr. Reddington noted the close proximity of households to Lough Corrib who were still not in the high-risk catchment zone and couldn't avail of septic tank grants.

In response to Cllr. Donohue, Mr. Deery stated that LAWPRO have been involved with river clean-ups and supporting groups to maintain and manage their local watercourses, however, they would have no role in the allocation of departmental resources for this function or septic tank grants.

Cllr. Reddington commenced the great community engagement work done by LAWPRO through the funding which was available to communities and stated that all parties were doing their best for the local environment based on available resources.

Ms. Finn noted concern that Agriculture was listed as the second highest pressure on water catchments, stating that certain pressures were attributed to agriculture which may be more appropriate to other agencies such as urban wastewater plant issues to Irish Water / Uisce Eireann. In reply Mr. Deery noted that the role of LAWPRO is to determine what is having a significant impact on water quality by direct action such as walking the land and watercourse and notifying any relevant state bodies of issues to be addressed. Where other potential pressures are identified, LAWPRO will inform the EPA, however, it is a matter for the EPA to collate these pressures and change any ratings going forward. He confirmed that LAWPRO meet with Irish Water on a quarterly basis and refer issues with wastewater treatment plants causing pressures in the water bodies.

3. Draft Litter Management Plan 2026-2028.

Ms. McGann updated the members on the Draft Litter Management Plan 2026 – 2028 noting that it was a statutory plan under Section 10 of the Litter Pollution Act 1997 which provided a 3-year framework to prevent and control litter in the local authority area. Ms. McGann confirmed that following consideration of the draft plan by the SPC Members, it would proceed to public consultation and targeted consultations, following which a report on same would be presented to the SPC for final consideration, and adoption by Plenary.

Ms. McGann outlined some key achievements from the previous Litter Management Plan:

- Strong engagement with schools with up to 190 schools involved in the Green Schools programme and more than 1500 entries in the Anti-litter competition.
- High annual participation in National Spring Clean, community clean-ups and Clean Coast campaigns.
- Great progress by Tidy Towns Groups in the National Competition and Special Award categories aimed at sustainability initiatives and anti-litter initiatives
- Strong participation in targeted anti-litter campaigns such as the Gum Litter Taskforce, Green Dog Walkers, Anti-Litter Ambassador Programme.
- Anti-Dumping Initiative projects targeting illegal dumping sites as well as preventative projects such as bulky goods collections
- Door to door inspections under Waste Byelaws to check waste presentation and collection arrangements which has led to an increase in compliance rates.

Ms. McGann summarised the main actions under the 4 Objectives in the Plan:

- Education & Awareness
- Community & Business Partnerships
- Local Authority Prevention & Control
- Enforcement & Regulation

In conclusion, Ms. McGann stated there was a strong foundation of existing initiatives and awareness, however, behavioural challenges persist and strong enforcement coupled with direct engagement with communities to identify specific issues and preventative actions and education was required moving forward.

Cllr. McHugh thanked Ms. McGann and stated that it was a very comprehensive plan with a multitude of actions and welcomed the clear emphasis on participation of young people in the initiatives, and the importance of advocacy and education in influencing changes in behaviour.

Cllr. Reddington complimented the great work of the Environment section and acknowledged the prompt response to investigation of illegal dumping complaints and noted the difficulties in securing evidence in these cases. He also noted the difficulties associated with littering at particular facilities such as take-aways with individual behaviour issues the cause of wrappers becoming a waste issue adjacent to these locations.

Mr. Finnegan acknowledged the brilliant work done by the Council's Road Sweepers and the importance of Community Employment Schemes in keeping local areas tidy and litter-free. He raised the issue of littering at Bottle Banks and the need to implement CCTV schemes at these locations without further delay as a deterrent to littering and stated that publishing and promotion of enforcement actions taken by the Council is also an important deterrent to future littering. Mr. Finnegan wished Rory O'Connor the local Community Warden a happy retirement and thanked him for his work in the community in providing supplies, skips and support to local groups. He also outlined the importance of Tidy Towns to the council and recommended that the Council support a "Love Your Place" theme for communities to engage in bespoke initiatives. Ms. McGann paid tribute to Mr. Finnegan for the work he is doing with Williamstown Tidy Towns and noted they were in second place in the small village category for Galway County.

Cllr. McHugh thanked everyone for their observations on the draft Litter Management Plan and stated that an important part of the Plan was to remind everyone that it is incumbent on us all not to litter, and to emphasise individual responsibility.

Ms. Ruane thanked the Environment team for the work they are doing and the preparation that had gone into the development of the draft Plan. Ms. Ruane also thanked the SPC members for their ongoing support and stated that it was great to hear the sense of pride in our county AND Mr. Finnegan for brilliant work with the Tidy Towns.

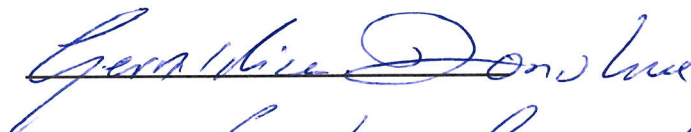
4. Agenda / Date of Next Meeting.

Ms. McGann stated that the date of the next meeting will be September 2026, after Draft Litter Campaign Public Consultation.

5. Any Other Business

No matters arose.

SIGNED:


County Councillor

DATE: 10/09/2026