

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **IWMA Welcomes EPA Enforcement Report on Waste Sector and**

**Report highlights improvements in recycling and waste management by private operators**

**However, benchmarking with other industrial sites is considered inappropriate**

**Calls for EPA's enforcement Role to be extended to all waste facilities, not just licensed sites.**

Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015 The Irish Waste Management Association (IWMA) welcomes the publication of the EPA Report on Waste Enforcement in EPA Licensed Sites published today but is disappointed that the Agency does not recognise the investment by the sector which has led to a significant reduction in complaints over the past ten years.

“EPA Licensed sites are amongst the most heavily regulated when compared with international best practice and all licensed sites must comply with over 200 licence conditions. The fact is that the number of complaints in relation to licensed facilities is reducing as a result of significant investment by the industry, particularly in odour abatement technologies and changes to how waste is managed and stored. Complaints in 2013 are down approximately 70% from their peak in 2009”, said Conor Walsh, secretary, IWMA

“The acid test when it comes to compliance is the number of successful prosecutions rather than the overall number of complaints or the compliance notices issued. Compliance notices can relate to issues as trivial as the late filing of a report to the EPA. Prosecutions, on the other hand, are only taken for significant issues. The number of successful prosecutions against private sector waste licensed sites averaged less than 3 per year over the last 15 years and only one waste licensed facility was successfully prosecuted in 2014. In the meantime complaints have fallen by 70%. This indicates the desire of the licensed industry to work with the EPA to achieve the maximum level of compliance possible”, he said

Mr Walsh welcomed the findings of the report that less waste is being landfilled than ever before, that the number of open landfills more than halved between 2010 and 2013, the amount of waste being used as fuel has doubled, and that the private sector is now responsible for almost all waste management in Ireland. “Waste that is non-recyclable that was previously sent to landfill is now fuelling Ireland’s cement kilns and in doing so, is replacing imported coal. This represents a major gain in terms of both energy and environment policy”, he said.

“These findings underline the crucial role of the private licensed waste management sector in Ireland. However, in light of the EPA Report findings the IWMA has called for the EPA’s enforcement role to be extended to all waste facilities, not just licensed sites”.

“The EPA report confirms the vital role played by the private licensed waste sector in relation to waste recovery in Ireland. We strongly support regulation of the waste sector and welcome the vigilance of the EPA in addressing issues of non-compliance. We want to see the same vigorous attention from the EPA on unauthorised operators who do not comply with the laws governing the treatment and disposal of waste”, he said.

Mr Walsh said that IWMA members were disappointed that the EPA is benchmarking waste sites relative to other industrial sites. “This is comparing apples with oranges. Waste management facilities perform a public service by managing a wide range of waste materials and control of incoming materials is more difficult than other industries, where raw materials are more consistent.

This makes compliance more difficult. The materials processed at waste facilities also tend to be odorous, so it is unfair to compare odour complaints at waste facilities with odour complaints at other industrial plants. The IWMA believes that the EPA should benchmark licensed waste facilities against equivalent facilities in other EU Member States and / or against historical performance in Ireland, rather than against other industrial sites. The Irish waste management facilities compare very well when benchmarked in this way”.

Mr. Walsh added “IWMA members have already implemented measures to address the future priorities identified in this report. For example, IWMA has strongly promoted fire prevention measures to our members over the past couple of years, including the organisation of a workshop on the subject in April 2014.”

### **About the IWMA:**

The Irish Waste Management Association (IWMA) is a trade association for waste management companies in Ireland. Our 32 member companies operate to the highest industry standards and have signed up to the Rules of the Association, that ensure that they provide waste management services to the public and to businesses in a professional and ethical manner. Our member companies employ 4,200 people directly and have a combined annual financial turnover of €645 million.

IWMA members collect 75% of the household waste currently managed in Ireland and the vast bulk of the commercial, industrial and hazardous wastes. Our members processed approximately 3.5 million tonnes of waste at our 65 non-hazardous and 10 hazardous waste facilities in 2013. The bulk of this waste was recycled or otherwise recovered.