

# EPA WATER

**CONFERENCE 2026**

**PROGRAMME**

**17 & 18 JUNE 2026**

Galway Bay Hotel, Salthill, Galway & Online



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



**NIECE**  
Network for Ireland's  
Environmental Compliance  
& Enforcement

 **ENGINEERS  
IRELAND**  
CPD Approved Event 2026

### Wednesday, 17 June 2026

10:00 – 16:00

#### Session 1: Setting the Scene

This session will introduce the overall policy and evidence context for Ireland's water environment, highlighting the key challenges and priorities that shape national and European approaches to water protection.

09:00

#### Registration

In person registration and online log-in

10:00

#### EPA welcome

Roni Hawe

Director of the EPA's Office of Evidence & Assessment, Environmental Protection Agency

10:15

#### Minister's address

Christopher O'Sullivan

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage with special responsibility for Nature, Heritage and Biodiversity

10:25

#### Department update on implementation of the Water Action Plan

Emma Quinlan

Water Scientific Policy Adviser – Water Advisory Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH)

10:45

#### The Water Forum's vision for the 4th Water Action Plan

Dr. Triona McGrath

Research and Policy Lead, National Water Forum

11:05

#### Q&A

11:15

#### Break

#### Session 2: Water Services

This session will explore key operational aspects of water management, covering regulatory responsibilities and core service areas that support water quality. Attendees can expect a practical overview of the systems, inspections and monitoring work that help safeguard Ireland's waters.

#### Chair

Noel Byrne

Programme Manager, Environmental Protection Agency

11:45

#### Addressing infrastructural and operational deficiencies in Urban Waste Water

Jim Fitzgerald

Regional Operations Manager, Uisce Éireann

12:05

#### Preventing problems before they arise: Introducing the Drinking Water Resilience Improvement List

Patrick Chan

Senior Inspector, Drinking Water Team, Environmental Protection Agency

12:20

#### Registration of small wastewater discharges - a new regulatory approach

Jim Moriarty

Senior Inspector, Dumping at Sea and Water Regulation, Environmental Protection Agency

12:35

#### A review of the National Inspection Plan for Domestic Waste Water Treatment System

Dr. Chris Fennell

Inspector 1, Waste Water Enforcement Team, Environmental Protection Agency

12:50

#### Q&A

13:00

#### Lunch

Evening swim at Blackrock beach:

June 17 at 16:30

Live music at the Atlantic bar:

June 17 starting at 21:30

Guided walk of Salthill Promenade:

June 18 at 07:30

---

### Session 3: Working with Communities

This session focuses on local water quality projects delivered in local areas with local communities. It showcases practical examples of how community groups, local authorities and sectoral partners are working together to protect waters and address issues at catchment level.

---

#### Chair

Matthew Craig  
Senior Scientific Officer,  
Environmental Protection Agency

14:30

#### Our Ladys Island Campaign

Eoin Kinsella  
Executive Agricultural Scientist,  
Wexford County Council

14:50

#### Shellfish in coastal waters

Dr. Vera O'Donovan  
Regional Development Manager,  
Bord Iascaigh Mhara

15:10

#### Stranoodan Group Water Scheme - Protecting water at the source

Ross MacDonald  
Source Protection Officer,  
Stranoodan Group Water Scheme

15:30

#### Better Farming for Water - Using a multi actor approach to improving water quality in priority catchments

Noel Meehan  
Head of Water Quality Knowledge  
Transfer Department, Teagasc

15:50

#### Panel discussion

16:00

#### End of day

---

## Thursday, 18 June 2026

---

### Session 4: Targeting Action

This session explores the tools, data and approaches used to target action where it is most needed. It highlights how science, characterisation, innovation and nature-based solutions are supporting more effective and targeted decision making.

---

#### Chair

Anthony Coleman  
Director of Services, LAWPRO

09:30

#### Developments in the evidence base to target and track measures

Dr. Eoin McAleer  
Senior Scientific Officer,  
Environmental Protection Agency

09:50

#### Catchment science informing actions

Ruth Hennessy  
Catchment Manager, LAWPRO

10:10

#### The right measure in the right place: Using scientific data to inform engineering decisions for achieving Water Framework Directive objectives

John Stack  
Senior Executive Engineer, Dublin City Council

10:30

#### Water European Innovation Partnership

Mairéad Whitty  
Project Lead, Farming for Water EIP

10:50

#### Q&A

11:00

#### Break

---

### Session 5: Restoring our Waters

This session centers on restoring rivers and nature, and the multiple benefits this delivers for water quality, biodiversity and communities. It highlights practical restoration initiatives and the wider ecological and societal gains from working with natural processes.

---

#### Chair

Jenny Deakin  
Programme Manager, Environmental Protection Agency

11:30

#### Waters of LIFE: Issues and actions for high status rivers

Anne Goggin  
Department of Housing Local Government  
& Heritage (DHLGH)

11:50

#### Aligning nature restoration with broader environmental policies

Derek McLoughlin  
Project Manager, Wild Atlantic Nature, LIFE IP

12:10

#### Wild Atlantic Salmon - A species in crisis and a beacon of hope

Prof. Ken Whelan  
Vice President, Atlantic Salmon Trust  
Alison Baker  
Restoration Director, Atlantic Salmon Trust

12:40

#### Panel discussion

13:00

#### End of day 2

Evening swim at Blackrock beach:  
June 17 at 16:30

Live music at the Atlantic bar:  
June 17 starting at 21:30

Guided walk of Salthill Promenade:  
June 18 at 07:30

# Speakers

## Roni Hawe

*Director of the EPA's Office of Evidence & Assessment, Environmental Protection Agency*

Roni Hawe was appointed as Director of the Office of Evidence and assessment in March 2026. Roni has over twenty years' experience in environmental governance, marine policy and regulatory reform across the public service. Prior to her appointment, Roni served as Programme Manager for Environmental Monitoring & Surveillance, leading the EPA's national air quality, noise and chemicals monitoring teams and the water and radiation monitoring laboratories. Before joining the EPA, Roni held senior roles in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, where she led capital investment programmes across Ireland's coastal and sea-fisheries infrastructure, and developed policy on co-existence with offshore renewable energy, climate action and marine planning. Roni holds a BSc in Earth Sciences (UCC) and an MSc in Applied Remote Sensing & GIS (Maynooth University) and is undertaking an Executive MBA (UCC).



## Christopher O'Sullivan

*Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage with special responsibility for Nature, Heritage and Biodiversity*

Christopher is the Fianna Fáil TD for Cork South West. In January 2025, he was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage with special responsibility for Nature, Heritage and Biodiversity. Born and bred in Clonakilty, West Cork, Christopher was a county councillor for 13 years, in which time he served as Mayor of County Cork. Since being elected to the Dáil Éireann in 2020 he has been a strong voice for the agriculture, hospitality, tourism and live entertainment sectors, as well as standing up for fishing communities hard hit by Brexit. Driving decisive climate action and protecting Ireland's rich biodiversity has been a major focus in his role as vice-chair of the Climate Action Committee. Christopher is a keen birder and whale watcher.



## Emma Quinlan

*Water Scientific Policy Adviser - Water Advisory Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH)*

Emma Quinlan is a Water Scientific Policy Adviser within the Water Advisory Unit at the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage. The unit oversees the implementation of water policy related directives, namely; the Water Framework, Groundwater, Priority Substances, Nitrates, Urban Wastewater Treatment, Bathing Waters and Drinking Water. Emma has over 18 years of experience in the water and environment sector. Prior to joining the Department in 2025, Emma worked for the Environmental Protection Agency for over ten years. She holds a PhD in freshwater ecology and fluvial geomorphology from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland.



## Dr. Triona McGrath

*Research and Policy Lead - National Water Forum*

Triona McGrath is the Research and Policy Lead with the National Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce), the statutory body established to facilitate stakeholder input to water policy development in Ireland. Triona leads the development of policy positions and submissions on behalf of the Water Forum on all water related topics, including water conservation, the protection and restoration of Ireland's water bodies and the delivery of water and wastewater services. One of her key roles is to commission and manage research projects to support the Forum to formulate statutory policy advice to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Water Policy Advisory Committee, Uisce Éireann and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities. Prior to joining the Water Forum, Triona's research focused on marine biogeochemistry, completing a PhD and post doctorate projects with the Marine Institute and the University of Galway.



# Speakers

## **Jim Fitzgearld**

*Research and Policy Lead - National Water Forum*

Jim is a Senior Manager in the Wastewater Asset Operations Function in Uisce Eireann. Jim has 40 years experience in the Water Sector having qualified in 1986 with a degree in Civil Engineering from University College Cork. His experience is wide ranging having worked for Consultant Engineers, Local Authorities, Contractors and Water Utilities. Jim started in Irish Water now Uisce Eireann back at the beginning of the setting up of Irish Water some 12 years ago in 2014. He now leads a cross functional team called Project Assure which will address concerns raised in recent EPA Annual Wastewater reports.



## **Patrick Chan**

*Senior Inspector, Drinking Water Team - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)*

With roots spanning West Cork and Hong Kong, Patrick is an environmental scientist with a BSc from University College Cork and an MSc from NUI Galway. He has over 26 years' experience across environmental education, monitoring, and regulation. His previous roles include positions at Fota Wildlife Park, Tipperary County Council, and Cork City Council. Patrick currently works with the Environmental Protection Agency, where he is the Senior Manager and Inspector responsible for the enforcement of drinking water regulations.



## **Jim Moriarty**

*Senior Inspector, Dumping at Sea and Water  
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)*

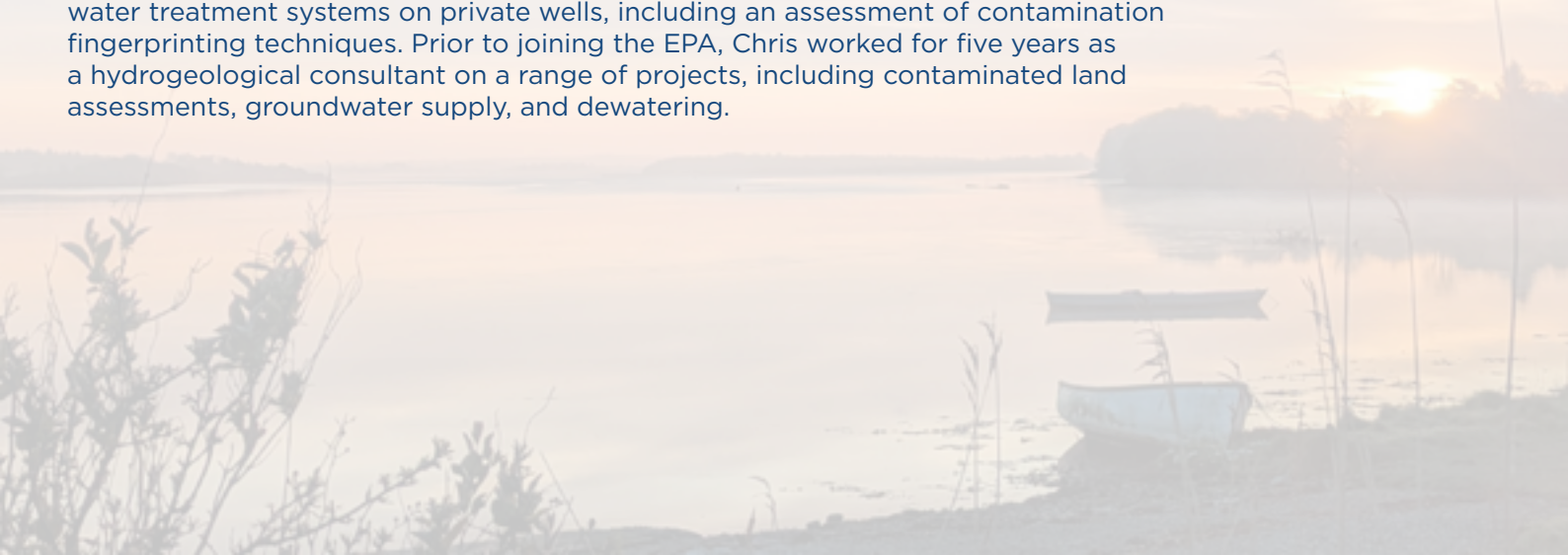
A chartered chemical engineer, Jim is an experienced environmental professional with 30 years' experience with Irish EPA. He has worked in the regulation and enforcement of Chemical & Process Industries, Waste & Landfills and Financial Provision for environmental liabilities. Jim now manages the Water Regulation team in the EPA with responsibility for wastewater licensing, Dumping at Sea and the new regime for licensing of Water Abstractions.



## **Dr. Chris Fennell**

*Inspector 1, Waste Water Enforcement Team, Environmental Protection Agency*

Chris is a Regional Manager in the Waste Water Enforcement Team of the Environmental Protection Agency, with responsibility for the National Inspection Plan for domestic waste water treatment systems. Chris holds a BA (Mod) in Environmental Science and a PhD in Hydrogeology from Trinity College Dublin. Chris's research background includes studies on pesticides in Irish catchments and the impacts of domestic waste water treatment systems on private wells, including an assessment of contamination fingerprinting techniques. Prior to joining the EPA, Chris worked for five years as a hydrogeological consultant on a range of projects, including contaminated land assessments, groundwater supply, and dewatering.



# Speakers

## **Eoin Kinsella**

*Executive Agricultural Scientist, Wexford County Council*

Eoin Kinsella is an Agricultural Scientist at Wexford County Council, bringing extensive expertise in sustainable agriculture, land management, and rural development. With a strong background in agricultural science, Eoin works closely with stakeholders across the farming sector to support environmentally responsible practices, enhance productivity, and contribute to regional climate and biodiversity goals. He has significant experience in translating scientific research into practical solutions for farmers and local communities, with a particular focus on sustainability, soil health, and advisory services. Eoin is passionate about promoting innovation in agriculture and fostering collaboration between policy, science, and practice. Eoin served as project manager of the Duncannon Blue Flag Farming & Communities Scheme (EIP) from 2018 to 2023 and prior to this role, he was contracted, through FRS Network, into Teagasc Advisory and Education across the Wexford, Wicklow & Carlow Region. Eoin also farms in partnership with his father, William, running the Broadway Parthenaise Herd, located alongside Ladys Island Lake.



## **Vera O'Donovan**

*Regional Development Manager, Bord Iascaigh Mhara*

Vera is Regional Development Manager with Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), heading a team of regional aquaculture development officers supporting industry on a wide range of development and licensing matters. The team supports the sector on water quality issues at local, regional and national level. Vera participates at the National Technical Implementation Group, UE Shellfish Disinfection Programme Stakeholder Group and Shellfish Waters Expert Group. With a strong track record in supporting Ireland's seafood sector through her work in Inshore Fisheries Development and the Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) programme, Vera played a key role in connecting regional concerns with national policy goals, fostering sustainable growth and collaboration across Ireland's seafood industry which she now brings to the aquaculture sector.



## **Ross Mac Donald**

*Source Protection Officer, Stranoodan Group Water Scheme*

Ross Mac Donald is a Source Protection Officer with Stranoodan Group Water Scheme (GWS), where he has dedicated the past six years to leading water quality efforts within the Dromore River sub-catchment of the River Erne. Ross brings a unique blend of high-level academic expertise and practical industry experience to his role. A graduate of University College Dublin, he earned an honours degree in Agri-Environmental Science in 2014, followed by a Level 8 degree in Food Science from Technological University Dublin in 2019. Beyond his academic credentials, Ross's approach is informed by six years of managing a poultry farm and a prior career in hospitality. This firsthand insight into the realities of agricultural operations and customer service allows him to bridge the gap between policy and practice. By combining technical knowledge with a "boots-on-the-ground" perspective.



## **Noel Meehan**

*Head of Water Quality Knowledge, Transfer Department, Teagasc*

Noel is currently Head of the Water Quality KT Department at Teagasc, responsible for leading the Better Farming for Water Campaign, provision of the ASSAP advisory service, NMP Online and the translation of scientific research into practical farm advice. He has worked with Teagasc since 2007, initially as an advisor with the Agricultural Catchments Programme and as a drystock enterprise advisor. He was appointed as ASSAP manager in 2018 for seven years before taking up his current role. Prior to working with Teagasc, Noel worked in both Offaly and Galway local authorities in the Environment Section covering both water quality and waste management.



# Speakers

## **Eoin McAleer**

*Senior Scientific Officer - Environmental Protection Agency*

Dr. Eoin McAleer is Manager of the Catchment Science and Management Unit in the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Evidence and Assessment. He leads work on water quality assessment and catchment characterisation, supporting the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in Ireland.

The Catchments Unit work centres on understanding the pressures affecting water quality and using monitoring data and analysis to help target effective actions.

---



## **Ruth Hennessy**

*Catchment Manager - Local Authority Waters Programme*

Ruth Hennessy is a Catchment Manager with the Local Authority Waters Programme. She has qualifications in environmental science and environmental engineering and now specialises in catchment science. Ruth has over 25 years' of experience and prior to joining LAWPRO she worked in private industry and in local government, in environmental protection and pollution prevention. As Catchment Manager, she leads LAWPRO's catchment science team in the South East Region.

---



## **John Stack**

*Senior Executive Engineer, Dublin City Council*

John Stack, Chartered Engineer and Senior Executive Engineer with Dublin City Council's Protection of Water Bodies Division, has over 20 years of environmental protection experience and delivering Water Framework Directive objectives. John brings substantial expertise to the intersection of regulatory compliance and environmental management.

John's focus centres on Water Framework Directive compliance, but his particular passion lies in nature-based solutions and their capacity to deliver multiple co-benefits. His work demonstrates how integrated approaches to river restoration, stormwater management, and biodiversity enhancement can simultaneously advance ecological outcomes, regulatory objectives, and community wellbeing through the development of social, recreational, and amenity assets. Holding two Master's Degrees—in Civil and Environmental Engineering, and Environmental Science—John combines rigorous technical knowledge with strategic environmental thinking. He is a strong advocate for nature-based solutions as essential tools in achieving Water Framework Directive objectives and champions their application across Dublin City Council's water management initiatives.

---



## **Mairéad Whitty**

*Project Lead, Farming for Water EIP*

Mairéad Whitty is Project Lead for the Farming for Water EIP project and a member of the LAWPRO Senior Management Team. The Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) is a national shared service working on behalf of all 31 local authorities in Ireland to coordinate efforts to achieve good or high water quality in rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waters, and groundwater, as required by the European Union Water Framework Directive. A Chartered Civil Engineer, Mairéad spent 19 years in the construction industry in Ireland and the UK before joining LAWPRO in 2023. She is responsible for the implementation of the Farming for Water EIP project, working alongside project partners Teagasc and Dairy Sustainability Ireland. This national project, the largest EIP to date in Ireland, provides funding to farmers to adopt supplementary measures to protect and restore water quality.



# Speakers

## **Anne Goggin**

*Project Manager, the Waters of LIFE IP*

Anne Goggin is the Project Manager of Waters of Life. Anne trained as a Civil and Structural Engineer, but has worked in the area of environmental protection for over 20 years. A large focus of her previous work was implementation of the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plans at local authority level, with particular focus on agriculture, wastewater and industrial discharges. She has a strong belief in the power of communities to effect change and was instrumental in establishing the Maigue Rivers Trust.



## **Dr. Derek McLoughlin**

*Project Manager LIFE IP - Wild Atlantic Nature*

Dr Derek McLoughlin has worked as an ecologist since 2003 across a range of ecological disciplines including ornithology, botany and freshwater ecology. He has a particular interest in land management and has been involved in the development of the results-based agri-environment payment scheme (RBPS) approach in Ireland and other EU member states. He is currently project manager on LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature, a project with a focus on the conservation of Atlantic blanket bog and associated habitats in Ireland. The nine-year project has leveraged a budget of over €60m over its first 6 years and uses a wide range of social, economic and ecological approaches in order to deliver its goals. A key facet of the approach is the investment in the skills and experience of landowners to add value to the land in terms of its ecosystem services. The project is Ireland's first to have been awarded the EU Natura 2000 Awards, in 2024.



## **Prof. Ken Whelan**

*Vice President, Atlantic Salmon Trust*

Ken has over 40 years' experience in the fields of entomology, fisheries science, recreational fisheries, climate change impacts and the stock dynamics of Atlantic salmon and sea trout. He worked for several research organisations in Ireland, including the Central Fisheries Board and the Marine Institute. Ken served as President of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) from 2004 to 2008. As President, he helped co-ordinate and manage the major SALSEA or Salmon at Sea Programme (2008 to 2011). Ken was Chairman of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (IASRB) from 2007 to 2011. He is a Vice President with the Atlantic Salmon Trust and served as Research Director with the AST from 2009 to 2023. He is currently President of the Institute of Fisheries Management. Ken is a fisheries and environmental consultant and is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Biology and Environmental Science, University College Dublin.



## **Alison Baker**

*Restoration Director, Atlantic Salmon Trust*

Alison has travelled from eighteenth century landscape change to managing rivers and aquatic environments, via built environment consultancy. Transforming two organisations; benefiting river environments and their species, understanding their connection to land and promoting people's relationships to them. History, engineering, habitats, connections - it has all played a part in the skills and experience to make positive changes. Now working at a UK level putting wild Atlantic salmon at the heart of our landscape.



# Chairs

## **Noel Byrne**

**Programme Manager, Environmental Protection Agency - Session 2**

Noel Byrne is the programme manager for the Drinking Water and Wastewater enforcement programme in the Office of Radiological Protection and Environmental Monitoring in the EPA. Noel was appointed to this role in June 2021. This programme has primary responsibility for enforcing the Drinking Water Regulations 2023, urban wastewater treatment authorisations and abstraction licences. Prior to this appointment Noel worked in the Office of Environmental Enforcement in the EPA since 2001, managing the enforcement of Industrial and Waste licensed facilities. Noel has a Degree in Agricultural Science and has a Master's in Business Administration.



## **Matthew Craig**

**Senior Scientific Officer, Environmental Protection Agency - Session 3**

Matt is the Senior Manager of the Hydrometrics and Groundwater team within the Water Programme of the Environmental Protection Agency. He has over 25 years of experience working in Ireland and the UK, with a primary focus on water quality, water resource assessments, and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD).



## **Anthony Coleman**

**Director of Services, LAWPRO - Session 4**

Anthony Coleman is Director of Services for the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), a shared service which works on behalf of Ireland's 31 local authorities to protect and restore good water quality in our rivers, lakes, estuaries, ground and coastal water. LAWPRO was established to fulfil requirements under the European Union Water Framework Directive and is funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to coordinate local authorities and other public bodies in the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan – Water Action Plan 2024. LAWPRO catchment scientists work to identify the issues and pressures affecting water quality and collaborate with the relevant local authority, public body, and water stakeholder to find solutions. The communities team work with voluntary groups and river catchment organisations to promote awareness and support community involvement in the stewardship of local streams, rivers, lakes, and coastal areas. Programme staff also administer various national funds and projects.

Anthony has over 25 years' experience in local and regional government having worked in the areas of community and economic development, planning, environment and local transport; he previously worked in Asia and Africa in the field of humanitarian relief and development aid. He has qualifications in business, community development, management and leadership.



## **Jenny Deakin**

**Programme Manager, Environmental Protection Agency - Session 5**

Dr Jenny Deakin is the Manager of the Water Programme in the EPA. She has 35 years of experience working in water quality and catchment science in the public, private and academic sectors, in Ireland and Tasmania. In her current role, Jenny leads a dedicated team of water professionals who are responsible for the delivery of the national water monitoring programmes, and assessing and reporting on the pressures impacting on waters.





---

**Conference Platform: EPA Water Conference (sli.do)**

---

**#epawater2026**

**epaconf@davisevents.ie**

---



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



**NIECE**  
Network for Ireland's  
Environmental Compliance  
& Enforcement



CPD Approved Event 2026