**Press Release Waste Survey Meath**

In response to continued issues with waste deposition, illegal dumping and lack of enforcement on the ground, the Meath Public Participation Network (Meath PPN) commissioned RedC to take a waste survey of community groups and public stakeholders in County Meath.

The survey included Tidy Towns Groups, Community Groups, Residential committees, farmers, schools, GAA clubs and selected households.

The results show clear insights into the areas that need to be tackled on the ground and could be representative of any county in Ireland.

A total of 903 email invitations were sent. Sample Size of n=175 completes represents a response rate of approximately 19% in total with Fieldwork taking place between 18th January and 9th February 2017.

**Key Findings and Recommendations**
• Illegal waste deposition is viewed as a problem among 66% of respondents with food packaging, dog fouling and household waste key problem areas in need of attention. Hazardous waste, Animal Waste (blood/milk) and Farm batteries were seen as less of an issue.

• Backroads, hedgerows and main roadsides are the areas most affected by illegal waste deposition. This ranges from individual items being thrown out of cars to bags of domestic refuse and larger household items such as mattresses.

• Water pollution was cited as an issue by 1 in 3 respondents, with illegal dumping and farming activities viewed as having the most impact on water quality.

• There is extremely limited availability of on-street recycling facilities or dog waste bins. However, almost as many would like to have these available as would like to have standard on-street litter bins.

• Brown (compost) bin roll-out seen as lacking in that direct provision was made to large agglomerations originally (>1,500), now >500 people, however a large percentage of the 194,942 population live in rural areas and will not receive a brown bin unless they request it directly from their provider.

• Uniform colour coded bins, for household waste collection and on street, seen as a positive to recycling.

• The cost of waste disposal facilities is viewed as having the greatest impact on people’s propensity to dump waste illegally. Free recycling days at local civic amenity sites and lowering the costs of waste disposal by the council were suggested as ways to overcome this barrier.

• Lack of enforcement is the second most mentioned factor impacting illegal waste deposition. Suggestions to alleviate this problem included surveillance, better education (extending the reach outside of schools), increased signage and stricter enforcement of existing legislation including harsher penalties.

**Other Findings**
• 2 in 3 people see illegal waste deposition as a problem in the Meath area with almost 1 in 5 viewing this as a very big problem.

• Food packaging, dog fouling, household waste, cigarette butts and chewing gum are viewed as the most problematic types of waste in the Meath region. Tyre waste, Hazardous waste, Animal waste and Farm batteries are least likely to be cited as problematic.

• Backroads, Roadsides and Hedgerows are the areas of particular concern for illegal waste deposition. Following these it is often areas around publically provided waste disposal facilities that are viewed as most affected. Other specific countryside areas are less likely to be mentioned, although bogs are seen by 1 in 12 to be the most affected area.

• Illegal dumping is viewed as the main source of water pollution while farming activities are deemed to be an issue across all pollution / contamination types.

• On-street litter bins are available in the Meath area with almost 7 in 10 citing that they are available in their local area, however recycling bins are not available at all with just over 1 in 10 having these available locally. Interestingly, almost 1 in 3 (31%) say there are no on street waste disposal facilities in their local area.

• The majority of people, recognise that colour coding of waste bins (residual, recycling and composting) is not uniform across County Meath, and 4 out of 5 of these, believe that it would be better if all bins in were colour coded in the same way.

• Just 2 in 5 (40%) are aware of any litter prevention awareness and education programmes in Meath with only 2 in 5 (41%) of those aware of these programmes satisfied with them.

• Awareness of channels to report illegal waste disposal are highest for local channels (Local authority (87%) and Litter Warden (70%)) with over 2 in 5 (45%) having used the local authority channel in the past. When looking to the future, local authority and litter wardens remain most likely to be used, but propensity to utilise the Environmental Complaints Phone line and the EPA App in the future rises significantly on current levels, indicating a need to raise awareness for these channels in particular.

**Respondents Views on Improvements**
Respondents were asked what they believed were the ways to improve waste infrastructure in their areas and the following key themes emerged:
• The introduction of CCTV cameras to affected locations and greater enforcement of existing anti-littering legislation were cited as key ways to address the issue of illegal dumping in County Meath.

• Increasing the number of on-street bins, particularly recycling and dog waste bins, were highlighted as ways to improve waste infrastructure. Local businesses were also highlighted by respondents as having an important role to play, especially fast food outlets and pubs where various types of waste were liable to accumulate.

• Increasing the amount of signage to provide the public with information on correct waste disposal methods and lowering the prices associated with waste disposal were also viewed as ways to improve infrastructure and alleviate the problem of illegal waste deposition.