

environmental problems before they become more expensive and intractable. Stock picture: Denis Minihane THU, 03 OCT, 2024 - 01:00 LIZ DUNPHY

Ireland faces "the most complex and interconnected environmental challenge for the next 25 years" as it transitions to a climate-resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally-sustainable, and climate-neutral economy by 2050.

The warning comes in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) flagship 2024 State of the Environment report, published today, which rated Ireland "poor" overall.

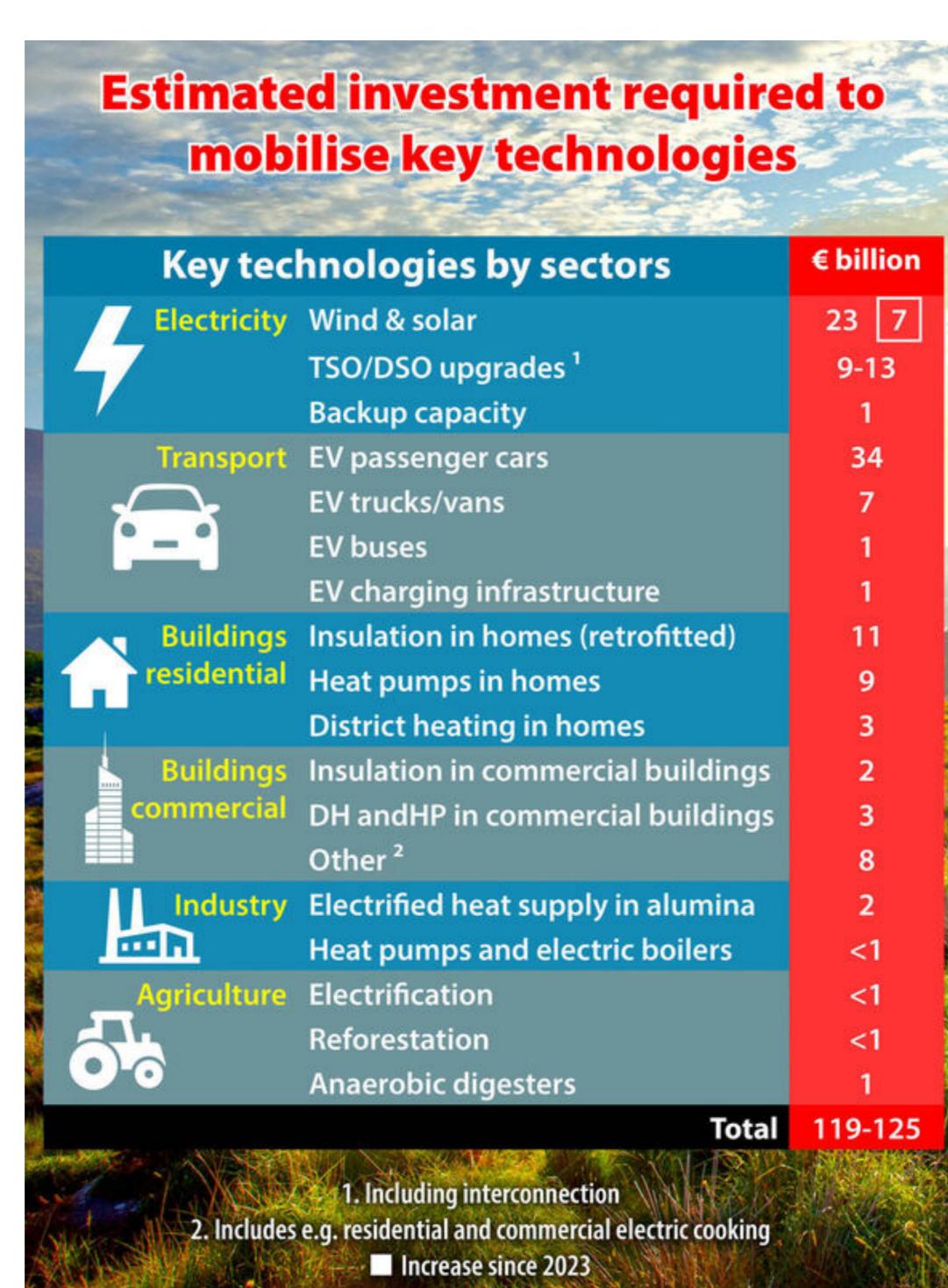
The report said a national, coherent, long-term policy position on the environment is urgently needed to address Ireland's environmental problems before they become more expensive and intractable.

Insufficient progress is being made to meet national long-term environmental objectives and targets, the report has found. This is especially pronounced where the problem requires coordinated action across different areas — such as how transport could contribute to air pollution, noise pollution, and climate change.

In all cases, the outlook is not positive, with substantial challenges to deliver on climate, air, nature, water, and the circular economy, the report found. **CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY HUB** 

The overall climate assessment is labelled as "poor" and "largely not on

track to meet targets with "systemic" change needed.



assessment for climate was still 'poor', a slight improvement from 'very poor' in the last State of the Environment report in 2020. However, Ireland is being affected by climate change now, and the severity of

While some progress has been made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, its

the impacts is likely to increase significantly. The overall assessment for air quality was 'moderate' — the same rating it received in 2020.

Although Ireland's reliance on landfills has reduced dramatically, we are generating and exporting too much waste.

Progress has been made in improving air quality in our cities, but we have increasing evidence that even low levels of air pollution impacts our health.

While we have addressed serious pollution in many rivers and lakes, we are not making progress on the more widespread water pollution from too much

nutrient. Transformation in the energy, transport, food, and industrial sectors are

needed to drive the necessary change, said EPA director general Laura Burke.



helped us achieve that," Ms Burke said. "We now look back to a time when we had serious industrial pollution of our

"We have made immense progress as a nation. Our membership of the EU

rivers, when we relied on over a hundred municipal dumps, when we burned smoky fuel in our cities — and we can never go back to that. "But where we are right now, while it is better, is nowhere near good enough.

We are always playing catch-up."



Although Ireland is compliant with current air quality standards for many air pollutants, it is not meeting World Health Organization WHO guidelines for

multiple pollutants including fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide. Changing to more sustainable forms of transport and heating would improve local air quality, the report said.

Ireland is non-complaint with the EU reduction target for ammonia and will remain so in the short term. 'Very poor' was the overall nature assessment, also the same as in the last report in 2020.

Protected habitats and bird populations have been deteriorating and Ireland

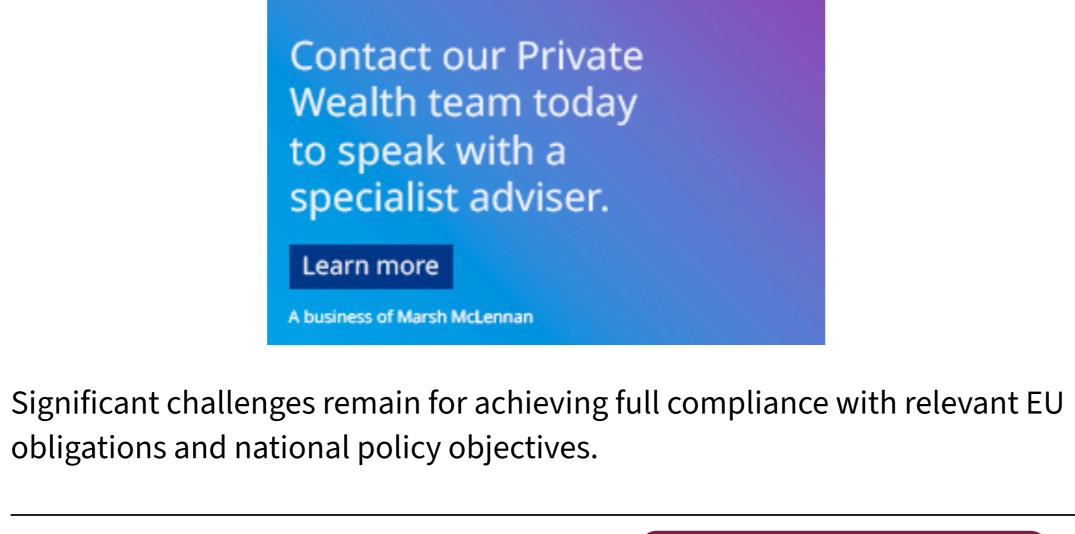
is not on track to achieve policy objectives for nature. The report said: 66 While the recent expansion of marine protected areas is welcome,

2020.

additional far-reaching measures are needed to address the declines in nature and biodiversity. The overall assessment for water is 'poor', also an unchanged rating from

Trends remain mixed, with no net improvement in river or lake water quality in recent years, a sharp decline in the number of monitored estuaries in satisfactory ecological condition and continued direct discharges of raw or

inadequately treated sewage to water from 19 agglomerations. Mercer welcome to brighter



What's your view on this issue? You can tell us here

The overall current assessment for the circular economy and waste is poor (the same as in 2020) but progress is being made to improve performance. Waste generation continues to grow, in absolute and per capita terms, and

these remain to be seen. The report said:

Ireland remains overly reliant on export markets for recycling and for treating

municipal residual waste. Recycling rates for municipal and plastic packaging waste streams are at risk and need to increase urgently to achieve 2025 targets. Recent interventions, such as the Deposit Return Scheme, statutory rollout of the organic waste collection service, recovery levy, and national end-of-

waste and byproduct decisions are positive developments but the effects of

66 We now have virtually no seriously polluted rivers, but we have hardly any pristine ones left, either. We now recycle more, but produce more waste than ever and export much of it.

squeezed."

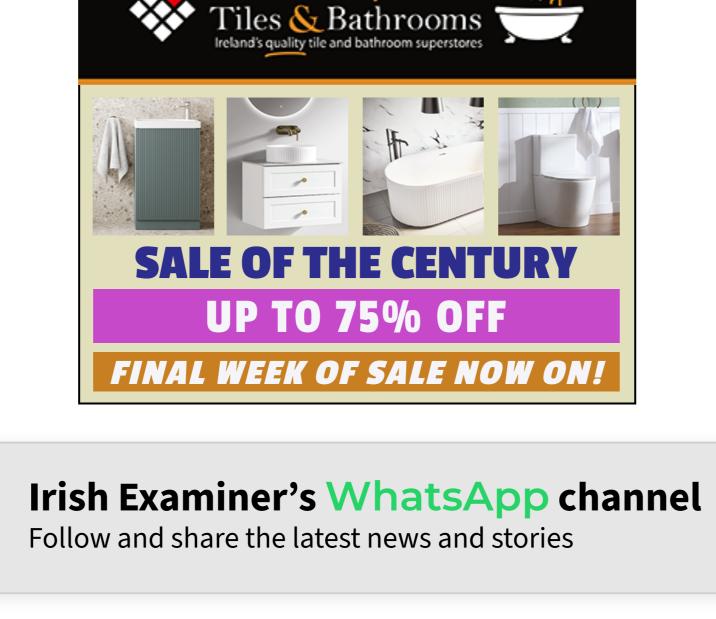
"We are taking positive actions across multiple fronts, but they are not keeping pace with the growing pressures, and our environment is being

And active engagement and participation of everyone will be essential if real and meaningful change is to be made, the EPA said.

Local authorities also have a vital statutory responsibility to protect our

environment. And local authority enforcement of environmental legislation is not always delivering the necessary environmental outcomes — like improved water and air quality, noise pollution, biodiversity protection and improved circular

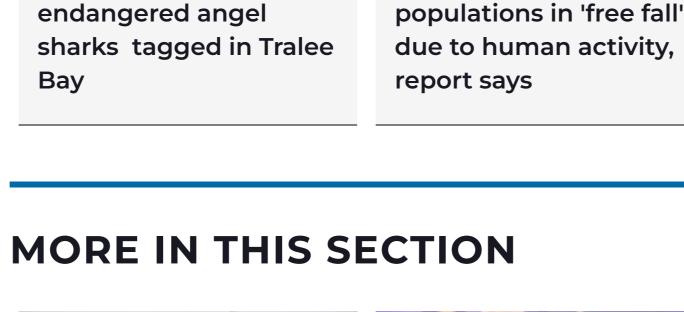
resource management — the report found. **Read More** Ireland on course to miss 2026 clean air targets, warns EPA

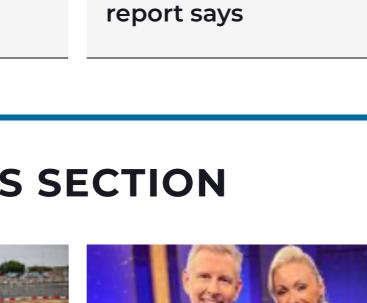


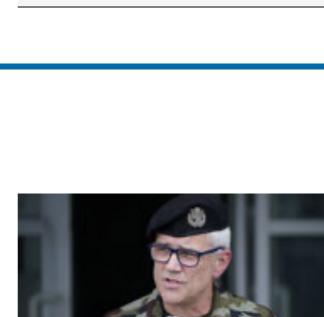


MORE SUSTAINABILITY ARTICLES

World's wildlife Watch: Two critically populations in 'free fall'







Irish sweaters: the

their wool

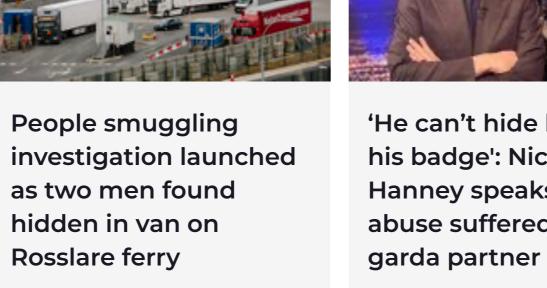
surprising truth about

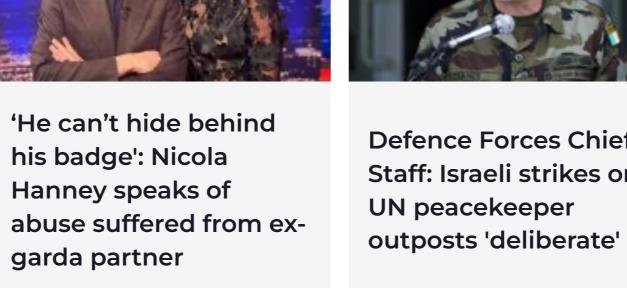
People smuggling

as two men found

hidden in van on

Rosslare ferry







#SUSTAINABILITY

**#FARMING - EMISSION TARGETS 25BY30** 

Lunchtime News Sign up to the best reads of the week from irishexaminer.com selected just for you. Your Email Name Sign Up Please click **here** for our privacy statement.

17 minutes ago Boherbue come from behind to stun Adrigole 33 minutes ago UN official appeals for Lebanon's ports and 40 minutes ago Dr Crokes defeat battling St Brendan's to reach Kerry SFC final 40 minutes ago

D X

Limited time offer Sign up today. an post mobile T&Cs apply

**MOST READ** Limerick hurling boss John Kiely enjoying new role working for JP McManus S Interview: John Kiely is already planning for a Limerick hurling future Cork and Waterford issued

with status yellow rain

warning with flooding

**SPORT** NEWS **BUSINESS** OPINION GAA Ireland Columnists Economy Soccer **Munster Business** Farming **Your View** 

INFO **Terms and Conditions** 

**Home delivery** Newsletters Place ad Who We Are Sitemap

Spotlight World

SUBSCRIBE NOW

Racing Golf Other Sports Podcasts

Technology

© Examiner Echo Group Limited, Linn Dubh, Assumption Road, Blackpool, Cork. Registered in Ireland: 523712.

FAQ Comment & Analysis Contact Us Privacy Policy **Brand Safety Cookie Policy Cookie Settings Push Notification** Preferences Mobile

Subscriptions

HELP