

## Request for Research Tender

# *Optimising Water Quality Returns from Peatland Management while Delivering Co-Benefits for Climate and Biodiversity*

**Closing Date: Monday 14 September 2020**

**Queries to be addressed to:**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION TO AN FÓRAM UISCE

An FÓram Uisce (The Water Forum) was established in June 2018 in accordance with the provisions of Part 5 of the Water Services Act 2017. An FÓram is the only statutory body representative of all stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland's water bodies. The Water Forum consists of 26 members including representatives from a wide range of organisations with direct connection to issues relating to water quality and also public water consumers. Approximately 50 different organisations were involved in the nomination of members.

The Water Services Act 2017 provides the statutory basis for The Water Forum. The Water Forum has advisory roles in relation to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Irish Water, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and also the Water Policy Advisory Committee. The Act also provided for the dissolution of the Public Water Forum and the National Rural Water Services Committee with their functions being incorporated into The Water Forum.

The Water Forum provides an opportunity for stakeholders to debate and analyse a range of issues with regard to water quality, rural water concerns, issues affecting customers of Irish Water and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021. The Water Forum is an independent entity and has discretion to determine its own work programme and means of communicating its views and analysis. To this end, it has adopted its [Strategic Plan](#) for 2018-2021.

Dr Tom Collins, who had been the chair of the Public Water Forum and a former Chair of the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee, is the Chairperson and Mr Donal Purcell is Senior Executive Officer. The Water Forum is headquartered in Nenagh, County Tipperary.

## 2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Peatlands, in the form of raised bogs, blanket bogs, and fens are of cultural and economic importance, providing multiple ecosystem services. Yet, it is estimated that only 23% of the original peatland area of Ireland is of conservation interest<sup>1</sup> as a result of the way in which many of the Ireland's peatlands have been managed. Over 37% of Ireland's active raised bogs within the country's protected Special Areas of Conservation have been lost in the past 20 years<sup>2</sup>.

Peatland degradation has been identified as a common contributory factor in the unfavourable status of many water-dependent habitats and species; and peat extraction is a significant pressure acting on many water bodies. Healthy peatlands help provide natural filtration processes to clean water, they help to 'slow the flow' and reduce the quantity of water entering rivers and lakes, they help regulate climate change, they support unique biodiversity, and they provide multiple cultural services. But degraded peatlands negatively impact water quality and as a result of peat extraction, drainage and

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<sup>1</sup> Malone, S. and O'Connell, C. (2009). Ireland's Peatland Conservation Action Plan 2020 – Halting the loss of peatland biodiversity. Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Kildare. <http://www.ipcc.ie/a-to-z-peatlands/peatland-action-plan/>

<sup>2</sup> DCHG (2017). National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022. Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. [https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/files/FOR%20UPLOAD%20Plan\(WEB\\_English\)\\_05\\_02\\_18%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/files/FOR%20UPLOAD%20Plan(WEB_English)_05_02_18%20(1).pdf)

the physical modification of aquatic habitats, resulting in the release of ammonium, sediment and carbon, and biodiversity is reduced.

The Water Forum wishes to offer a research tender for a **scoping study to provide strategic guidance** for the Forum’s consideration as to how peatland management can be reimagined for Ireland’s future with regards to optimising water quality improvements while delivering co-benefits for climate change and biodiversity. It is envisioned that the available national and international literature will be synthesised to address each of the five components and associated items shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Components to be addressed in this study**

| Component  | Items to be addressed in this study  |
|--|--|
| 1. Rewetting   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ecological condition of the different types of peatlands in Ireland.</li> <li>• Ecosystem services and disservices provided through rewetting peatlands for water quality, climate and biodiversity.</li> <li>• Gaps in legislation and policy regarding rewetting in Ireland.</li> <li>• Barriers to implementing rewetting actions.</li> <li>• Recommendations regarding the rewetting of Ireland’s peatlands.</li> </ul>   |
| 2. Carbon Sequestration                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of Ireland’s peatlands in the carbon cycle.</li> <li>• Review of peatland management in Ireland with regard to Ireland’s contribution to climate change.</li> <li>• Peatland management actions that can mitigate climate change impacts of degraded peatlands.</li> <li>• Gaps in legislation and policy regarding mitigating the climate change impacts of degraded peatlands in Ireland.</li> <li>• Barriers to implementing measures to mitigate the climate change impacts of degraded peatlands in Ireland.</li> <li>• Recommendations regarding the future management of Ireland’s peatlands to mitigate climate change.</li> </ul> |
| 3. Social value of peatlands                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis of the cultural ecosystem services and disservices provided by peatlands in Ireland.</li> <li>• Summary of policy and legislation which have impacted, positively or negatively, on the social value of peatlands.</li> <li>• Proposed actions to help increase the social value of peatlands in Ireland.</li> </ul>  |
| 4. Alternative management options of degraded peatlands    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical land use of peatlands.</li> <li>• International examples of alternative peatland management/land use options.</li> <li>• Potential for alternative peatland management/land use options in Ireland.</li> </ul>   |
| 5. Resources for future integrated management of peatlands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible funding models for consideration to deliver progress on Components 1-4, above.</li> <li>• Possible stakeholder engagement mechanisms required to facilitate multi-stakeholder involvement in future peatland management.</li> </ul>  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can the proposed funding models and stakeholder engagement mechanisms be delivered within a catchment/landscape approach to peatland management?</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

Applications are welcome from individuals or from consortia. See Section 9: Terms and Conditions for further information.

### 3. PROJECT DELIVERABLES

The following deliverables are required for the awarded tender:

- Final report, encompassing all requirements listed under Section 2.
- A Policy Brief document identifying the key policy recommendations for peatland management to optimise water quality returns and deliver co-benefits for climate and biodiversity.

### 4. BUDGET

The currency and invoices in which all prices and rates shall be quoted, and which payments under the contract will be paid, shall be Euros (€).

The **maximum budget is €25,000**, inclusive of VAT and overheads where applicable.

#### 4.1 Payment Schedules

An upfront payment of 50% of the total agreed budget will be made upon receipt of invoice from the contracted service provider or institution following the initiation of the project and the signing of the funding agreement for the project.

Further payments for the remaining 50% of the total agreed budget will be made as per the agreed timeframes stated in the funding agreement for the project.

### 5. TIMELINES

The proposed timeframes for project delivery are outlined in Table 2, however, these are subject to confirmation at the project initiation meeting and finalisation in the executed funding agreement between parties.

**Table 2: Timeframe for project delivery**

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Publication of tender                | 6 August 2020                                   |
| Deadline for tender submissions      | 14 September 2020                               |
| Award of tender and start of project | 25 September 2020                               |
| Project initiation meeting           | On or before 9 October 2020                     |
| Draft report submitted               | Preferably before 31 December 2020 <sup>1</sup> |

<sup>1</sup>It is preferred that the draft report will be submitted on or before 31 December 2020, however consideration will be given to a later submission date in extenuating circumstances. Applicants should outline their proposed timeframes for project completion along with justification for the timeframes in their submission.

Following review of the draft report by The Water Forum, a completed final report is to be submitted which takes into account any proposed amendments to the draft report.

## 6. MARKING SCHEME

All submissions will be assessed by a panel of suitably qualified persons.

Marks will be awarded (maximum 100 marks) based solely on the information provided in the submission, as follows:

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the subject matter of the brief and the requirements of the project (40 marks).
- Project management arrangements (20 marks).
- Details of budget and timeline, including compliance within the stated budget and specified timelines (20 marks). A GANTT chart outlining the timeline for project actions and deliverables is mandatory.
- Demonstrated relevant research track record of team appropriate to the subject matter, including previous/ongoing projects delivered and scientific publications (20 marks).

## 7. SUBMISSION OF TENDERS

Applications must be submitted no later than **5pm 14 September 2020** via email to Dr Alec Rolston, Research Lead, An Fóram Uisce | The Water Forum: [alec@nationalwaterforum.ie](mailto:alec@nationalwaterforum.ie).

Submissions must include:

- A completed application form.
- A CV (max 4 pages) of the lead person to whom the tender will be awarded.

An acknowledgement of receipt of applications will be issued within 48 hours of the submission deadline.

## 8. AWARD OF TENDERS

**One** award will be made through this request for research tender.

Applicants will be notified of the success of their submissions no later than **25 September 2020**.

Bodies of work may be initiated immediately from the date of award, with an initial project meeting to take place on or before 9 October 2020.

## 9. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- All applications must be made using the official application form.
- Applications may be received from both single individuals and consortiums of individuals from different institutions. Consortium applications must identify the **lead person** to whom the tender may be awarded. All other members of the consortium will be sub-contracted by the

lead person. The maximum total budget of €25,000 (inclusive of VAT and overheads) is applicable to individual applications and consortium applications respectively.

- The Water Forum will disqualify incomplete applications, applications not using the application form provided and any application received after closing time/date. Compliance with the word limitation contained on the Application Form is a requirement of the application process.
- It is a necessary requirement of the application process that the successful applicant must provide a copy of their Organisation/University/Institution's current Tax Clearance Certificate.
- Failure to address within the final report each of the items included under Section 3 will result in the withholding of final payment until all requirements are met.
- Upon awarding the project, a funding agreement will be drafted and executed between The Water Forum and the successful applicant's Organisation/University/Institution.
- The Water Forum will have copyright ownership of any material developed for use by The Water Forum under the terms of this research tender. The service provider may have a non-exclusive licence to use such material but only for its own purposes (to be agreed with the successful applicant).
- The principles of Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019 will be applied where there is any potential for commercial exploitation of project outputs resulting from this research tender.
- The Water Forum encourages an open access publication policy. Publications arising from research tender awards funded by The Water Forum should, as a minimum, ensure open access via Green methods (depositing the peer-reviewed manuscript in an online repository before, at the same time, or after publication). All reports will be uploaded to, and publicly accessible via, The Water Forum's website: [www.thewaterforum.ie](http://www.thewaterforum.ie).
- Any publications arising from research tender awards funded by The Water Forum must acknowledge An Fóram Uisce|The Water Forum as the source of funding.
- Projects funded by The Water Forum must uphold the highest standards of research integrity and The Water Forum expects all research tender awardees to abide by the guidelines outlined in the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland; and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information – When an application is received by The Water Forum, a record is created in the name of the applicant. This information will be stored by the office of The Water Forum, where relevant, in paper/electronic form. Information that is collected by the Office, including information that you give us, is added to the record. You have the right, given by the Data Protection Act of 1988 and 2003, to a copy of your information at any time. The Office is also subject to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2014.

The information we record is used for the following purposes:

- Processing and assessing of applications;
- Payment arrangements;
- Auditing requirements;
- Informing and advising The Water Forum in relation to the Project and using same as a basis for further consideration by The Water Forum including research projects and policy analysis and recommendations;
- Publication of the Project Outcomes.

**End/**