

The Peatlands Council



June 2013

Message from the Chair

Seamus Boland

This is the first Peatlands Council Newsletter, which is designed to give you an update on the important work of the Peatlands Council.

I was appointed Chair of the Peatlands Council in November 2012 by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Mr Jimmy Deenihan TD. In this role, I continue the work of my predecessor, Mr Conor Skehan. Through Conor's tireless, diligent and creative work, the Peatlands Council is now an important forum where groups can work together to balance Ireland's legal obligations to protect some of our bogs with the rights and needs of affected turf cutters.

The Peatlands Council exists to bring all parties in this issue together. The Council includes those who have an interest in the protection of Ireland's

bogs, those who want to address the needs of affected turf cutters, and officials from the Department.

The Peatlands Council is working towards the development of an overall peatlands strategy to help bring clarity to how our peatlands will be managed in the future. Ireland's peatlands are vast and there is room for many uses, including turf cutting, forestry, agriculture, tourism and conservation.

Our role is to help bring certainty and clarity to these issues and to address the concerns of many communities.

I am determined to use my current role to advance the resolution of the turf cutting issue. I believe that progress can be made if all stakeholders continue to talk to each other, and to work together. In this

regard, I am willing to meet with anybody who wishes to speak to me about any aspect of this challenge. I also hope to visit as many bogs as I can during my time as Chair of the Peatlands Council.

I hope that you find this newsletter of interest, and if you have any queries in relation to any matter in the document don't hesitate to make contact with me.

Le dea-mhéin
Seamus



Message from the Minister

Jimmy Deenihan TD

The establishment of the Peatlands Council, as part of a new approach to finding a long-term resolution to the issues raised by the protection of some raised bogs, was one of the first steps that the Government took on coming to office in 2011.

Since then, the Peatlands Council has made a considerable contribution to this issue, and I welcome the publication of the first newsletter by the Council.

As Minister with responsibility for heritage issues, my aim has been to ensure the preservation of Ireland's raised bog SACs, protected under Irish and European law, whilst providing compensation and

relocation options to turf cutters who have been impacted by the necessary restrictions on turf cutting within these bogs.

So far, in the region of €3.88 million has been paid in compensation and the delivery of turf under the compensation scheme. If you think you may be eligible for compensation I would encourage you to apply.

I would like to thank Conor Skehan, the first Chair of the Peatlands Council, for his achievements in the role from 2011 to late 2012, and also acknowledge the energy and commitment that Seamus Boland has shown since his appointment last year. I believe that - together - we are

making progress on this issue, especially in the processing of compensation payments and in assessing relocation options. Considerable work remains to be done over the course of 2013 and in the years that follow, and I would like to thank you for your support and interest in this work.

Kind regards

Jimmy Deenihan
TD
Minister for
Arts, Heritage
and the
Gaeltacht



About the Chair

Seamus Boland is Chief Executive of Irish Rural Link, an organisation which represents the interests of community groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas. He is also Chair of the social inclusion agency Pobal.

Seamus has been involved with rural community issues for many years. He was centrally involved in the relocation project at Clara Bog where turf cutters, including Seamus, negotiated terms to relocate to a nearby undesignated bog.

About the Peatlands Council

Established by Government in April 2011.

Comprises an independent Chair, representatives from the Irish Farmers Association, Irish Rural Link, The Turf Cutters and Contractors Association (TCCA)*, The Irish Peatlands Conservation Council, The Environment Pillar, Bord na Móna, Coillte and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. 12 meetings of the Council have been held since 14 April 2011, the latest on 8th May 2013. As well as discussions relating to the Peatlands Strategy, the work of the Peatlands Council has contributed to:

- Improved compensation for turf cutters (proposed by the IFA and Irish Rural Link)
- The provision of turf as an alternative to financial payment (proposed by the IFA)
- Improvements to the operation of the compensation scheme
- The development of approaches to relocation
- A pilot project exploring whether the compensation scheme could include home energy element for affected turf cutters

Contact the Peatlands Council - Tel: 01-8883207

Email: peatlandscouncil@ahg.gov.ie

** The TCCA withdrew from the Peatlands Council in September 2011*

A Peatlands Strategy

As part of the Government decision of 5 April 2011 it was decided that a Peatlands Strategy would be prepared. It is the responsibility of the Peatlands Council to oversee the drafting of this strategy and to consult with all stakeholders and with the public to ensure that it reflects all of the different viewpoints that exist.

This Strategy will guide the Government's approach to peatlands management and conservation in the future, taking into account current and potential uses of this key resource. An initial public consultation was undertaken last year. The Peatlands Council is now working through drafts to ensure that all relevant issues are adequately addressed.

A further public consultation on this document will take place later this year. It is vitally important that when the public consultation is announced that all people with a view or opinion on the draft document make a submission.



National Raised Bog SAC Management Plan

The development of a National Raised Bog SAC Management Plan was recommended by Mr. Justice John Quirke in his report following the 2012 Peatlands Forum. The development of a National Plan was also called for in a unanimous vote in Dáil Éireann.

This plan will give us the ability to explore whether there are any other options available to us for those sites where relocation is genuinely not possible. It will also indicate how the 53 SACs will be restored and managed into the future, which will be done in full consultation and partnership with those who own the bogs and surrounding land owners.

The plan will be wide ranging, looking at how we can conserve, restore and manage the SACs. What we will be looking for from this plan is detailed solutions for each of the 53 raised bogs. The discussions about relocation that are happening with turf cutters

across the country will be a central part of the plan. For the most difficult sites, we will finally have an answer on whether the Government can allow, in a manner consistent with the Habitats Directive, some limited turf cutting within a small number of the 53 SACs where relocation is genuinely not a possibility. The plan requires the input of local communities and will have to be approved by the European Commission.

The position of both the Government and the European Commission has been, and remains to be, that until this plan has been approved, which could be early 2014, continued unauthorised cutting cannot take place on any raised bog SAC. However, arrangements have been made to provide qualifying turf-cutters with a supply of turf or a financial payment while the plan is being worked on, so there is no need for any turf cutter to go short of fuel as the plan is being finalised.

RPS to deliver the Scientific Basis for Raised Bog Conservation

On Thursday 14 March, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht announced that it had awarded this contract to RPS.

Under the terms of the agreement, RPS will provide scientific and technical information and analysis to the Department. The work to be undertaken by the company will include topographical, hydrological and ecological survey and modelling work. This will be undertaken by a team of specialists from disciplines including raised bog eco-hydrology/hydrogeology, ecology, impact assessment, raised bog ecological assessment, surveying, management planning and environmental consultation and engagement.

RPS have already commenced this vital work, which will feed into the SAC Management Plan and also the review of NHAs.

For more information on the study, or to register your interest in receiving study updates, visit www.raisedbogconservation.com or email info@raisedbogconservation.com.



Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme

2671 people have applied to participate in the Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme operated by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

- 781 have expressed an interest in relocating to a non-designated bog to continue turf cutting
- 2381 payments of €1,500 each have been made
- 205 deliveries of turf have been made to turf cutters' homes
- In the region of €3.88 million – in direct payments to turf cutters and the cost of turf deliveries – has been paid so far
- Payments for 2013 have already commenced

Qualifying applicants will receive €1,500 each year for 15 years. These payments will be index linked. Alternatively and where feasible, turf cutters can apply to be relocated to another bog, where they can continue to cut turf. These applicants will receive payments of €1,500 or deliveries of 15 tonnes of turf to their homes for each year they have to wait for the new site to be made ready for turf cutting. For those opting for the delivery of turf while awaiting relocation, there is flexibility in the provision of additional turf to other family members who had been cutting on the family bog plot.

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is now issuing letters and legal agreements to applicants which will legally bind the State to the payment of compensation over 15 years or to providing compensation until relocation arrangements are finalised. An additional payment of €500 will be made when the legal agreements are signed by both parties.

Relocation Solutions Being Progressed

Relocation is a slow process which will take time. However, significant advances have been made, and it is expected that the rate of relocation will increase further in 2014 and subsequent years.

Arrangements for the relocation of turf cutters to non-designated bogs have been made for a group from Clara Bog in County Offaly and a group from Carrownagappul Bog and Curraghlahanagh Bog in County Galway. The group from Clara Bog successfully relocated to a site in Killeranny, Co. Offaly and cutting took place on the weekend of 27-28 April this year. See photo on opposite page.

Discussions have been ongoing with a view to the relocation of turf cutters from Ballynafagh Bog in County Kildare to Timahoe North, County Kildare, which is in the ownership of Bord na Móna.

The Department is also currently consulting with a group of turf cutters from Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough with a view to their relocation to Togher, Killeglan Bog County Roscommon which is also in the ownership of Bord an Mona.

For the remaining raised bog special areas of conservation, the Department has identified potential relocation sites for a further 32 bogs and work is ongoing on identifying and investigating sites. Relocation is unlikely to be required, or is likely to be small-scale, for another 16 raised bog special areas of conservation.

It is important to reiterate that a payment of €1,500, index-linked, or a supply of 15 tonnes of cut turf per annum is available under the Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme to qualifying turf cutters while they are awaiting relocation to non-designated bogs.

The Department is still accepting applications for compensation under the scheme

For enquiries contact: (053) 911 7310/ LoCall 1890 253147

See Page 7/8 for breakdown of compensation by bog.

What About NHAs?

Between 2003 and 2005, 75 raised bog Natural Heritage Areas were designated. While the last Government decided that turf-cutting would cease on these sites from 2014, this decision is currently being reviewed, in light of commitments given in the Programme for Government agreed by the Government in 2011.

The review is currently underway and should be completed by the end of this year.

It is anticipated that turf cutters on these sites will be provided with clarity on the future of turf cutting in time for the turf-cutting season in 2014. While these sites are not regulated under the Habitats Directive, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive does apply. EIA is used to assess the environmental impacts of a specific project with the aim of ensuring the sustainability of the project.

SACs – A Community Opportunity?

The aim of the National Raised Bog SAC Management Plan is to agree approaches to the restoration and future management of our raised bog SACs in partnership with owners and local communities.

While it is not always recognised, these SACs are extremely rare and special places with a value far beyond their current uses. Restoration and management of these sites may provide opportunities for local employment, and the creation of local recreation amenities.

Some communities have expressed an interest in developing walking routes around the bogs. Issues such as illegal dumping, fires and impacts of restoration on adjoining lands will also need to be discussed between local communities and the relevant public authorities. Part of the plan will be to explore what EU and other funding lines are available and to ensure that such funding is made available, and put to best use at the local level.

Turf Cutters Keep Their Bogs

Turf cutters who avail of compensation or relocation do not give up their ownership of their bogs. There is no transfer of ownership to the State. Turf cutters who relocate to a non-designated bog will be given rights to cut on that bog while maintaining their ownership of their land in the SAC.



Turf cut on the relocation bog at Killeranny, Co. Offaly on the weekend of 27-28 April 2013.

Fáilte Roimh Comhfhreagras i nGaeilge

Cuireann Comhairle na d'Tailte Móna fáilte roimh comhfhreagras i nGaeilge. Tá leagan leictreonach den nuachtlitir seo ar fáil ach ríomhphost a sheoladh chuig peatlandscouncil@ahg.gov.ie nó trí ghlaoch ar 01-8883207

Frequently asked questions on the Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme (CTCCS)

What is the background to this issue?

Ireland signed the Habitats Directive in 1992 and nominated 53 raised bogs as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) between 1997 and 2002. In January 2011, the then Government received a formal letter from the European Commission noting that Ireland faced legal proceedings in the European Courts as a result of the failure to protect these SACs.

What proportion of bogs are affected by the cessation?

53 raised bog sites are closed for turf cutting from 2011/2012. This represents less than 2% of the peatlands in the State where turf cutting is feasible. The position regarding future turf cutting on raised bog Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) is being reviewed in accordance with the Programme for Government. The review is due to be complete in advance of the 2014 cutting season

When is the deadline for making applications under the Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme?

The closing date for applications generally has passed. However, the Department will continue to accept late applications for the time being.

Why do I have to have been cutting in the past 5 years in order to qualify for Compensation?

The purpose of the compensation scheme is to compensate those individuals who are at an actual loss because they had been actively sourcing their fuel from their bog which is now no longer possible. This is in keeping with the general compensation provisions arising from restrictions due to SAC designation that have been in place since 1997.

Why do I have to sign a legal agreement with the Minister?

Under the Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme, in order to

finalise compensation arrangements, applicants must sign a legal agreement with the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The signing of the document means that the Minister is bound to provide you with the compensation as outlined in the legal agreement. While the signing of the document also means that you are undertaking to no longer cut turf on Special Areas of Conservation, it should be noted that this activity is against the law.

Does the legal agreement impact on my land ownership?

No. The agreement clearly states that title to property will not change. Your existing land ownership or turbary rights will not transfer to the Minister by the signing of the agreement.

What happens if I sign and return the legal agreement?

Signing and returning both copies of the legal agreement will allow the Department to send you a €500 once-off incentive payment. You will also remain in the Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme and will continue to receive compensation under the scheme. (Option 1: €1,500 every year, index linked, for 15 years. Option 2, if you have expressed an interest in relocation: €1,500 every year, index linked or the supply of 15 tonnes of turf while a relocation bog is being made ready)

What happens if I do not sign and return the legal agreement within four months of receiving it?

Should you have difficulty with meeting this time limit, you should contact the Department to discuss the matter. The Department is willing to be flexible, as appropriate, as regards the signing and returning of the legal agreement. However, at some point, the non-return of a signed legal agreement may jeopardise the receipt of compensation under the Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme.

I am only interested in relocation, but there is no relocation site ready for me, what can the Department do for me?

Qualifying applicants who have indicated that they are interested in relocation can receive financial payment(s) or delivery(ies) of turf until such time as a suitable relocation site has been identified and prepared.

If I have expressed an interest in relocation how are my interim financial payments or deliveries of turf taken into account when I relocate to a non designated bog?

Each relocating turf cutter's allocation (number of hoppers of turf) in a relocation site will be calculated on the basis of the amount of uncut high bog which he or she had remaining within the Special Area of Conservation, subject to an upper limit of 650 hoppers. Any interim financial payment or delivery of cut turf will be reckoned against this allocation.

What happens if the terms of the compensation scheme are changed?

The compensation may be adjusted by mutual consent of the Minister and you. You will not be penalised or prejudiced by having already entered into the legal agreement.

Where can I get more information about the compensation scheme?

If you have any questions please contact Lo-Call 1890 253147 or (053) 9117310, or email designated.bogs@ahg.gov.ie.

Please note: Payments under the CTCCS to applicants are subject to the Department being satisfied that all of the qualifying criteria for the scheme have been met. Future payments will be affected if the Department cannot verify that an applicant meets the criteria. Any applicant who is concerned should contact the numbers above to discuss their individual case.

Compensation Breakdown SAC by SAC

The figures below are correct as of 27th May 2013. For the most up to date figures by SAC, please visit <http://www.npws.ie/peatlandsturf-cutting/turfcutting/compensationschemestatistics/>

Name	County	Applications	No. Opting for Payment	Relocation	Turf Deliveries Made	Payments Made 2011-2013	Total Payment
Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally)	Cavan/Meath	45	37	8	0	4	€6,000
Barroughter Bog	Galway	68	41	27	2	125	€187,500
Cloonmoylan Bog	Galway	81	73	8	1	112	€168,000
Kilsallagh Bog	Galway	32	23	9	3	61	€91,500
Lisnageeragh Bog and Ballinstack Turlough	Galway	20	11	9	2	18	€27,000
Lough Corrib	Galway/Mayo	93	83	10	0	134	€201,000
Lough Lurgeen Bog/Glenamaddy Turlough	Galway	31	22	9	2	38	€57,000
Shankill West Bog	Galway	12	9	3	0	17	€25,500
Sheheree (Ardagh) Bog	Kerry	1	1	0	0	0	€0
Ballynafagh Bog	Kildare	56	28	28	8	42	€63,000
Lough Ree	Roscommon/Longford/Westmeath	308	212	96	20	211	€316,500
Flughany Bog	Mayo/Sligo	17	14	3	0	21	€31,500
All Saints Bog and Esker	Offaly	6	4	2	0	0	€0
Clara Bog	Offaly	107	50	57	27	105	€157,500
Ferbane Bog	Offaly	4	1	3	0	0	€0
Mongan Bog	Offaly	5	4	1	0	2	€3,000
Moyclare Bog	Offaly	26	5	21	0	36	€54,000
Raheenmore Bog	Offaly	0	0	0	0	0	€0
Sharavogue Bog	Offaly	2	2	0	0	0	€0
Bellanagare Bog	Roscommon	185	138	47	11	239	€358,500
Callow Bog	Roscommon	97	80	17	5	87	€130,500
Carrowbehy/Caher Bog	Roscommon	3	3	0	0	2	€3,000
Cloonchambers Bog	Roscommon	29	23	6	0	18	€27,000
Derrinea Bog	Roscommon	1	1	0	0	0	€0
Cloonshanville Bog	Roscommon	7	7	0	0	4	€6,000
Ballyduff/Clonfinane Bog	Tipperary	2	2	0	0	4	€6,000
Kilcarren-Firville Bog	Tipperary	25	22	3	0	27	€40,500
Garriskil Bog	Westmeath	1	1	0	0	2	€3,000
Carrownagappul Bog	Galway	132	62	70	35	126	€189,000
Lough Forbes Complex	Roscommon/Longford	13	9	4	0	2	€3,000
Corliskea/Trien/Cloonfelliv Bog	Galway/Roscommon	79	65	14	5	106	€159,000
River Moy	Mayo/Roscommon/Sligo	73	64	9	0	29	€43,500
Mouds Bog	Kildare	101	62	39	35	51	€76,500
Coolrain Bog	Laois	56	45	11	5	47	€70,500
Knockacoller Bog	Laois	26	21	5	0	10	€15,000
Carn Park Bog	Westmeath	60	27	33	6	44	€66,000

Compensation Breakdown County by County con'd

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Name	County	Applications	No. Opting for Payment	Relocation	Turf Deliveries Made	Payments Made 2011-2013	Total Payment
Crosswood Bog	Westmeath	71	38	33	3	49	€73,500
Drumalough Bog	Roscommon	20	19	1	0	13	€19,500
Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough	Roscommon	62	32	30	6	43	€64,500
Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs	Meath/ Westmeath	88	76	12	2	72	€108,000
Ardagillion Bog	Longford	41	30	11	2	26	€39,000
Mount Hevey Bog	Meath/ Westmeath	67	28	39	4	27	€40,500
Tullaher Lough and Bog	Clare	196	169	27	4	157	€235,500
Brown Bog	Longford	6	6	0	0	1	€1,500
Camderry Bog	Galway	14	6	8	4	16	€24,000
Clooneen Bog	Longford	12	9	3	0	15	€22,500
Corbo Bog	Roscommon	72	43	29	1	45	€67,500
Curraglehanagh Bog	Galway	46	27	19	12	28	€42,000
Moanveanlagh Bog	Kerry	28	25	3	0	34	€51,000
Monivea Bog	Galway	46	40	6	0	46	€69,000
Redwood Bog	Tipperary	77	71	6	0	68	€102,000
Tullaghanrock Bog	Roscommon	1	1	0	0	0	€0
Ardgraique Bog	Galway	20	18	2	0	17	€25,500
Totals		2671	1890	781	205	2381	€3,571,500

