



Appointment of a Chairperson to a working group to examine the issues identified during a Review of the use of Peat Moss in the Horticultural Industry

Appointing Body:	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
Location:	90 King Street North, Smithfield, Dublin 7 D07 N7CV
Department's Website:	www.npws.ie
Closing date for expressions of interest:	23 November 2020

Minister for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan T.D., is seeking expressions of interest for appointment to the position of Chairperson of a working group which is being established arising from the Review of the use of Peat Moss in the Horticultural Industry. The role of the Chairperson will be to chair meetings of the working group and to issue recommendations to the Minister arising from its deliberations. Any enquiries in relation to the position must be submitted to peatinhorticultrereview@chg.gov.ie or to Peat in Horticulture Review, Peatland Issues and Land Designation Section, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 90 King Street North, Smithfield, Dublin 7 D07 N7CV.

It is intended that the appointment will be for a period of 6 months but may be renewed subject to the agreement of the Minister.

Background

Action 5, set out in the National Peatlands Strategy 2015, provides for a Review of the use of Peat Moss in the Horticultural Industry. To undertake this review, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht established a working group comprised of representatives from:

- Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht - Chair
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- The Environmental Protection Agency.

The working group produced an Issues Paper on the Review of the use of Peat Moss in the Horticultural Industry. This paper was published on 9 October 2019 and submissions were invited on the paper by 31 January 2020. 34 submissions were received from industry stakeholders, Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations and the general public. A report on the Review of the use of Peat Moss in the Horticultural Industry was prepared by the working group on the basis of the submissions received. The review report was published by Minister Noonan on 7 September 2020. The Minister intends to establish a working group to include representatives from relevant Government Departments and State Agencies, Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations and industry stakeholders under an independent chairperson to examine the issues which were identified during the review and, in particular,

- Eliminating the use of peat moss in the amateur gardening sector in order to leave what remains in use for the industry sector to buy time to develop alternatives, enabling food security and to provide industry surety.
- Graduating the elimination of the use of peat moss in the Horticultural Industry over an agreed period of years with an agreed end date.
- Finance and support for those workers whose skills cannot be accommodated in proposed alternative industries.
- Investment in further research into the development, education and use of alternatives to peat moss, such as bark, wood fibre, coir, biosolids, bracken and green compost, perlite, vermiculite, rockwool, and horticultural clay and in new methods of farming such as Paludiculture and Sphagnum farming.
- Up-skilling the existing workforce to regenerate the existing bogs for use in Paludiculture, Eco-Tourism, Carbon Farming, and Tree Farming as appropriate to optimise environmental outcomes.
- Quantifying the value of the existing viable peat lands as carbon sinks and then determine a carbon market to incentivise owners and operators of peat lands to preserve, rewet or restore their assets.
- Educating the public to the benefits of what would be proposed to include the climate and environmental benefits, the economic, social, cultural and public health benefits.

The review report (with a summary of the submissions received on the Issues Paper in an Appendix), the Issues Paper and a copy of each submission received on the Issues Paper is available on www.npws.ie and on www.chg.gov.ie.

Role of Chairperson:

- To familiarise himself/herself with the Issue Paper, the submissions received on the Issues Paper and the review report.
- To chair the meetings of the working group and to issue recommendations to the Minister arising from its deliberations.
- To endeavour to foster an atmosphere conducive to constructive debate, openness, fairness and effectiveness during meetings of the working group.

Remuneration

The Chairperson is to be paid a fee. The rate is €392 to be paid for the day of each meeting and in respect of a maximum of 3 meeting days per month. Travel and subsistence are payable at the prevailing civil service rates and terms and conditions.

Person Specification

The Chairperson of the working group needs to be independent of Government Departments and State Agencies, Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations and peat industry stakeholders. He/she needs to:

- Have excellent communication skills;
- Have an ability to work with individuals and groups coming from considerably different perspectives;
- Be tactful and demonstrate an empathy with others;
- Have an understanding of, and be able to assess, various and sometimes complex economic, legal, social and environmental issues:

- Provide direction and facilitate decision making;
- Have experience in chairing boards/forums and/or stakeholder engagement/consultation; and
- Have a strong sense of ethics and integrity.

Submission of Expressions of Interest

Expressions of interest must be made by the submission of a covering letter and supporting Curriculum Vitae (CV). The covering letter and CV must clearly specify how the particular background and experience of the applicant meet the requirements of the person specification set out above. In the covering letter the applicant must confirm that he/she does not have a conflict of interest or legal impediment which would be likely to interfere with his/her ability to act as Chairperson of the working group. The applicant must also confirm that he/she will make himself/herself available to attend meetings and to carry out the duties of Chairperson of the working group.

Expressions of Interest for this appointment to the position must be submitted by 5.30 pm on 23rd November 2020 to peatinhorticulturereview@chg.gov.ie or to Peat in Horticulture Review, Peatland Issues and Land Designation Section, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 90 King Street North, Smithfield, Dublin 7 D07 N7CV. Any enquiries in relation to the position must also be submitted to this email or business address.

Assessment Process

An Assessment Panel will be convened by the Department to consider and assess the expressions of interest received. The Panel will review and discuss the expressions of interest received against the person specification for the position of Chairperson. It will then arrive at a shortlist of suitable candidates for consideration by the Minister. The Minister may invite the proposed Chairperson to meet to discuss the approach which he/she would take to the role. A decision will then be taken by the Minister on the appointment.

Confidentiality

Subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and Access to Information on the Environment Regulations, expressions of interest will be treated in strict confidence. All enquiries, applications and all aspects of the proceedings are strictly confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone, outside those involved in a particular aspect of the process.

The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 and the General Data Protection Regulation also apply.

The Chairperson, on appointment, must hold information obtained in his/her role as Chairperson confidential and act in accordance with provision 5.6 of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies in this regard.