

SFI Public Service Fellowship 2023

1. Name of Governmental Department or Agency
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
2. Title of the Project
SEAI3 Investigating ecological conservation management while maximising Ireland's clean energy transition
3. Description of the Project
<p>It is recognised that the development of renewable energy sources is crucial for achieving Ireland's and the EU's energy and climate targets. However, exploitation of renewable energy resources may also lead to certain environmental problems or risks regarding human health. Ireland, through the Climate Action Plan (2021), established an increased 80% renewable energy target for the electricity sector by 2030. Accelerated deployment and delivery of Ireland's clean energy ambitions need to be conducted in adherence with EU biodiversity goals, in particular EU protected habitats and species.</p> <p>Renewable energy developments, such as wind, solar, ocean, geothermal and bioenergy, all require a planning authority to grant permission for the activity. As part of this application process, environmental screening is required for any likely impacts of the project on the environment and in particular, on protected habitats or species. Environmental assessments, including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment, are tools which help to maximise environmental and social benefits resulting from renewable energy development, while avoiding or minimising potential adverse effects. Increased demand of renewable energy in turn is increasing demand for ecological participation.</p>
4. Project Scope
<p>SEAI wishes to examine ecological conservation management and its role in Ireland's clean energy transition.</p> <p>Proposals to this topic should aim to suggest approaches, in line with EU Directives and ambitions, that could mitigate potential risk and streamline project level development, while capturing implications for stakeholders, including landowners and citizens. A review of best practice in other countries would be a welcome aspect of the project.</p> <p>A key outcome of this Fellowship is the design of a framework for landscape scale habitat and conservation management required to sympathetically maximise regional renewable energy deployment while allowing sufficient offsetting for habitat management and other land uses such as afforestation, farming and carbon sequestration. The framework will identify the required components to operate in step, and make recommendations for a national strategy.</p>

5. Skills/Expertise Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A PhD or equivalent in a relevant discipline • Relevant experience and skills in ecological conservation management
6. Expected Outputs of Project
<p>The following is a non-exhaustive list of potential outputs that could be expected from this fellowship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review policies in place in European member states, identifying measures that may support the mitigation of negative impacts to the Irish context, and tracking any unintended consequences; • Literature review of evidence-based research into effective mitigation and compensation measures that have contributed to planning confidence; • Habitat Management - review the efficacy of existing management plans and analysis of how adaptive management could be put in place based on current best evidence; • Consider how ecology legal requirements fit in to the planning regime, including suggesting a best practice review process for local authorities to follow; • Conduct additional research activities relating to ecology in the energy sector which may be required to support SEAI in delivery of relevant activities.
7. Working Arrangements
<p>Fellows will be based in the Research and Policy Insights Directorate at SEAI, Three Park Place, Hatch St Upper, Dublin 2. A hybrid working arrangement is in place with SEAI staff in the office 2 days per week.</p>
8. Expected Timeline
<p>12 months full-time or 24 months part-time</p>
9. Contact Details