

Press Release

17 September 2024

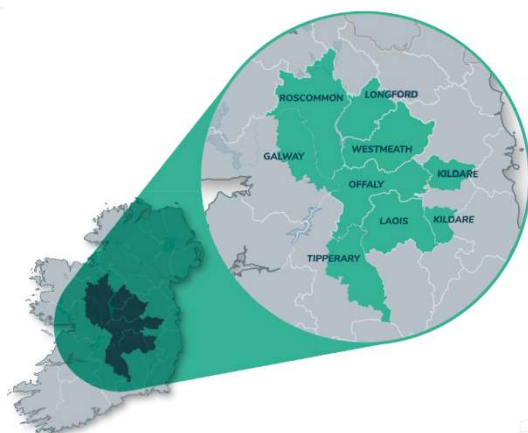
New wetland restoration project opens a call for public participation

- Expressions of interest sought from local individuals and groups to identify wetland sites to be restored.
- Tóchar team in NPWS will support successful applicants in restoring their lands by providing funding towards survey work, restoration planning, interpretation and education or restoration actions on the ground.
- Landowners, communities and local groups in the EU Just Transition Territory are eligible for this call.

Tóchar is a three-year wetlands restoration project, co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the EU Just Transition Fund Programme. Taking its name from the hundreds of ancient paths or toghers laid across the bogs by our ancestors, the project will serve the community, bringing participants on a nature restoration journey.

“We hope that people will get involved in Tóchar, so that we can co-operate and build relationships together with the land and its wetlands. Restoration of nature goes hand in hand with improving the resilience of communities, particularly important during this time of climate change. We need to care for the land and its keepers, and this includes the wetlands and their users in the EU Just Transition area,” noted Shirley Clerkin, Tóchar Project Manager.

In order to start the process, Tóchar have opened an expression of interest call to landowners, communities and groups to become actively involved in nature restoration for wetlands across the EU Just Transition area.



County	Municipal districts covered
Laois	All
Westmeath	All
Offaly	All
Longford	All
Roscommon	All
Galway	Ballinasloe
Tipperary	Carrick on Siur Thurles
Kildare	Athy Clane - Maynooth





Welcoming the launch of the call for Expressions of Interest, Minister of State for Nature, and Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan TD, said: “The restoration of wetlands is part of the just transition journey towards climate neutrality, a journey where nature can play its part in the provision of a wide range of ecosystem services including nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation. But nature also provides solace, health and recreational benefits, particularly for those who live in the vicinity of nature and wetland sites that are in good condition. Restoring wetlands as part of the Just Transition is essential and community participation in this type of activity has numerous benefits. I am delighted to announce the call for Expressions of Interest for the Tóchar Wetlands Restoration scheme and I look forward to its outcomes over the next number of years.”

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface all year or for varying periods of time during the year. The wider midlands’ hosts a broad diversity of freshwater wetlands such as marshes, fens, bogs, callows and ponds, each playing a crucial role in ecology, climate change mitigation and adaptation, water quality, healthy environments, local communities and economies. With support from Tóchar, nature in the heart of communities across the EU Just Transition territory can be restored with these associated benefits.

To support participants on this restoration journey, Tóchar have created a straight forward step-by step expression of interest form. The Tóchar team will follow up with the necessary assistance to progress projects, whether that be through survey work, restoration planning, interpretation and education or restoration actions on the ground.

To quote the author, Robin Wall Kimmer who wrote “We restore the land, and the land restores us” the project takes inspiration from the idea that ecological restoration is inseparable from reconnecting people and the landscape. Hope and positivity comes from action, and the project team hopes many communities can get involved in meaningful action on the ground.

Niall Ó Donnchú, Director General with NPWS stated that “Engagement and co-operation are the principles on which we depend as we develop initiatives for nature restoration. Tóchar Wetlands Restoration is in the early stages of implementation in the midlands and the Just Transition territory. The National Parks and Wildlife wants broad participation in this scheme, to ensure the investment in wetlands and their stakeholders makes a positive impact in as many communities as possible.”



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“The first step is to get in touch with us, fill out the expression of interest form, giving us whatever information you have, so that we can start connecting and co-operating” encouraged Monica Byrne, from Tóchar.

The project is managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service with a project office in Birr, Co. Offaly. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), who are the Managing Authority for the EU Just Transition fund.

Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald, Cathaoirleach of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly said, “This call for expressions of interest is a great opportunity for individuals, landowners, and communities to play an active role in making a difference. By restoring nature and our peatlands together, we can build climate resilience and a more sustainable future for ourselves and generations to come.”

Clare Bannon, Acting Director of EMRA said, “EMRA has been working closely with the NPWS team over the last number of months, and we are looking forward to the next stages as people across the region get involved and engaged with wetland restoration. Restoration of peatlands is one of our key deliverables as we work to bring the community through a just transition loosening the dependency on peat as a fossil fuel.” Overall the project will spend €12m during its lifetime.

Complete the expression of interest form or for further information please email monicambyrne@npws.gov.ie

Expressions of interest should be returned by email to tocharwetlands@npws.gov.ie or post to Tóchar Wetlands Restoration Scheme, NPWS, Birr Technology Centre, St Brendan’s St., Co. Offaly R42 HX39 by 31 October 2024

Ends.



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Expression of Interest Form for Tóchar Wetland Restoration Projects

Who are you?			
Your Name		Your Organisation	
Contact Name		Contact Telephone no	
Contact Address		Contact Email	
Where are you?			
Site Name	Designated site (<i>please circle</i>)		Yes/No/ Don't know
Townland/ County			
How to get there? Eircode			
Who owns the land?			
Let's get started on the stepping stones to see where we are at!			
	Where on the Tóchar are you?	What Tóchar Wetlands can do for you?	Please tick your step
Step 1	The area is within the Just Transition Territory but we not sure if the area is a wetland. What should we do?	Let us know the location details of your site & we will check it out & get back to you	



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Step 2	The area is a bog, fen or wetland but we are not sure where to start	You are in the discovery stage - we can assist by doing a vegetation survey to check out the current health of your wetland area. This will identify the ecological status of your site, look at the issues (if any) & see what can be done to restore or improve it	
Step 3	The area is a bog, fen or wetland but there are problems that we would like to see addressed	We can help to develop a restoration plan for your site	
Step 4	We have a restoration plan for our site but need advice & finance to implement the plan	We can assist with both ecological advice & finance	
Step 5	We have undertaken restoration work but don't know if it's working	We can assist with monitoring your site to see how the restoration measures are impacting on the habitat	
Step 6	We have a wonderful wetland site & we want to tell everyone about it!	We can assist you in the provision of interpretation materials, signage and possibly sustainable visitor access	
Extra	If you have something else we should know that will help us to help you, let us know.		





Send the information back to us

By Email tocharwetlands@npws.gov.ie

By Post

Monica Byrne

Project Administrator, Tóchar Wetlands Restoration Scheme, EU Just Transition Fund

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Birr Technology Centre, St Brendan's St, Birr, Co Offaly R42 HX39

T: **01 539 3160**

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https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/data_protection_policy.pdf



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