



## **IWEA submission on the Peatlands Council consultation on the National Peatlands Strategy**

**16 December 2011**

The Irish Wind Energy Association (IWEA) is the national association for the wind industry in Ireland representing over 200 members including small private wind farm developers and large energy companies. IWEA is Ireland's leading renewable energy representative body.

IWEA welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and notes that the Strategy is required to give direction to Ireland's approach to peatland management, including bog conservation and restoration, over the coming decades.

IWEA welcomes the recognition that there are many issues to be considered in devising a strategy for the future use of our peatlands and the implications of various uses, socially, economically and environmentally. The recognition of wind farm development as one of the issues that need to be considered along with the protection of rare and threatened habitats and species, forestry, agricultural use, realising the value of peatlands as a national and local resource in terms of their potential as carbon stores, their potential as tourist and recreational amenities and their use in the regulation of water and the attenuation of flooding and drought is also welcomed. IWEA notes that the strategy will need to recognise that these uses have and continue to be important socially and economically and that this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

IWEA believes that through using appropriate methodologies for peat risk assessment, peatland areas can be suitable locations for wind farm developments. IWEA is currently completing a revision to the **"Best Practice Guidelines for the Irish Wind Energy Industry"** which includes significant guidance on developments in peatlands including a new methodology for peat risk assessment.

IWEA notes that the Strategy is required to give direction to Ireland's approach to peatland management, including bog conservation and restoration, over the coming decades and welcomes that this direction will be informed by a scientific review, however IWEA notes that industry has some concerns over the EPA publication "Boglands: Sustainable Management of Peatlands in Ireland" which is also referenced. IWEA would be keen to discuss these concerns further in the development of the National Peatlands Strategy.

IWEA notes that the Council is made up of representatives from the following groups:

1. Turf Cutters and Contractors Association
2. Irish Peatland Conservation Council
3. Irish Farmers Association
4. Irish Environmental Network
5. Irish Rural Link
6. Bord na Móna
7. National Parks and Wildlife Service

IWEA would like to request that it too also be offered a place on Council, as the largest national association for wind energy developments with our members being involved in more than 85% of the wind farm capacity planning to build from now to 2020.

IWEA feel we can make a positive contribution as part of the Peatlands Council in assisting Ireland in responding in a strategic way to the requirements of the EU Habitat's Directive which require Ireland to protect and conserve important peatland habitats.

IWEA looks forward to engaging further with the Peatlands Council in the development of the National Peatland Strategy and requests a meeting to discuss the Strategy in more detail.