



IRISH PEATLAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL

COMHAIRLE CHAOMHNAITHE PHORTAIGH NA HÉIREANN

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**Department of Communications Climate Action and
Environment
29-31 Adelaide Rd
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11th June 2019

Take Climate Action and Protect the Environment against Peat Piracy

Dear Minister Bruton,

The Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) are writing to you asking you to take action to stop Peat Piracy.

We are a charity that aims to conserve a representative sample of peatlands for present and future generations to enjoy. All can benefit from the eco-resources that healthy peatlands provide. Peat Piracy is taking many forms but we have noticed an increase in the number of enquiries from the public asking what they can do in relation to illegal extraction of peat for turbarry by individuals and contractors using machinery. We have had reports (see below) of random peat extraction from across the country. None of this random extraction is regulated and is usually below the thresholds for Local Authority or Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) intervention closing this route for action. Similar communities can experience bullying from the Peat Pirates if they report the activity to the Gardaí. As minister you are a last resort in seeking a resolution of this issue.

If sites are designated as Special Areas of Conservation or Natural Heritage Areas a permit is required from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to cut turf. No such permit is required for the vast majority of turf banks and sites across the country which cover over 1 million hectares of land. The lack of regulation promotes Peat Piracy as ownership in sites can be vague on the ground coupled with their remote locations which makes it difficult to have oversight on activity. IPCC need you to introduce a program of regulation or permits for turf cutting across the country in the interests of controlling the level of greenhouse gas emissions coming from the drainage and exploitation of bogland. As the country strives to offset our carbon emissions turf extraction needs to be regulated.

As it stands, planning permission is only needed from the Local Authority if the development is greater than 1 hectare. As most peat extraction for domestic use is less than this the County Councils will not initiate enforcement procedures. If peat extraction is greater than 30 hectares then developers are required to be licenced under the Environmental Protection Agency's Integrated Pollution Prevention Control licensing system (IPPC). At least these systems of regulation enforce climate mitigation measures.

Peat Piracy, by its definition, is not regulated. There is no independent authority or body to report this activity to. It is a direct cause of environmental damage. If we are serious about climate-change then we need to have a system in place that allows these small environmental disasters to be reported and investigated as collectively they add up to a national problem. There is no means of enforcing rehabilitation/restoration when cutting ceases. In the cases reported to IPCC individuals feel intimidated to report Peat Pirates to Gardaí or local councillors as it can lead to bullying within the community. As an elected representative please give this issue your urgent attention and I await to hear your decision.

35 YEARS TAKING ACTION FOR BOGS AND WILDLIFE

Charity No/Uimhir Carthanacht: CHY6829 Registered in Ireland No/Uimhir Cláraithe in Éirinn: 116156 Registered Office/Oifig Cláraithe: Lullymore, Rathangan, Co. Kildare, R51 V293, Ireland
Governance Code Statement of Compliance: IPCC confirm that our organisation complies with The Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charitable Sector in Ireland.

Company Secretary/Rúnaí Comhlacht: Rachel Kavanagh

Directors/Stiúrthóirí: Martin Kelly, Catherine O'Connell, Rachel Kavanagh, Miriam Mooney, Kate Macnamara, Seán Ó Fearghail,

Patrons/Pátrúnaí: Pauline Bewick, Don Conroy, HRH Princess Irene of the Netherlands,

Eanna Ní Lamhna, Matthijs Schouten, His Excellency Mr Peter Kok Netherlands Ambassador to Ireland

Your Sincerely,



Tristram Whyte - Freshwater Biology B.Sc(hons) - IPCC - Conservation Policy & Fundraising Officer

The issues reported to IPCC in 2019.

Location	Date	Issue
Rathmore, Co. Meath	20/5/2019	The contractor is removing turf for sale from a turf bank that is not owned by them. The owner of the turbrary rights for the bank did not agree to this. The contractor is conducting the same activity to all the turf banks on the site. The caller was anonymous.
Cloontirm, Co. Longford	4/2/2019	The only owner of turbrary rights on the site has witnessed a contractor extracting huge amounts of turf for sale. The reporter felt they had no-where to report the incident due to it causing friction within local community. The caller was anonymous.
Co. Donegal	2/5/2019	Enquiry from a member of the public concerned about fresh turf cutting in a bog they live beside, by an unknown individual. They did not know who to report this to, the member of the public was concerned about the wildlife. The caller was anonymous.
Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	8/2/2019	A member of the public reported to IPCC that peat is being extracted but they did not know if it was legal and within turbrary rights. They are concerned that the bog will vanish. The caller was anonymous.