



ESAI ANNUAL REVIEW 2024

ESAI Chairpersons Address from Dr. Niamh Power



The Environmental Sciences Association of Ireland (ESAI) has been involved in a number of activities throughout 2024. This end of year report summarises some of the key events and activities throughout the year.

The highlight of the year was our Environmental Researchers Colloquium (Environ). The 2024 Environ conference was hosted in collaboration between the ESAI and South East Technological University (SETU) on their Waterford campus. This Environ focused on the theme of "Harvest to Harbour: Research from Soil to Sea". The event took place from the 25th to 27th of March 2024, at its traditional calendar slot of the Easter timeframe. Environ 2024 commenced on the afternoon of Monday 25th of March with an interactive workshop on 'Greener Labs' and two guided field trips to Anne Valley Park, a community-developed amenity and Copper Coast Geopark, a UNESCO Global Geopark. Despite the weather these trips received very positive feedback. Later that evening saw a lively Panel discussion on 'How to Run your Business Sustainably', which was open to the public. Speakers from different fields discussed what their companies are doing sustainably for the environment, with great engagement and interest from the general public. The question-and-answer session which followed gave a wonderful insight into the enthusiasm for this topic. The following two days saw a wide variety of presentations showcasing the best of environmental research on the Island of Ireland. I would like to acknowledge Dr Graece Tan and her team for hosting Environ 2024 at SETU. The colloquium in Waterford was a huge success and extremely well organised.


A meeting of the Early Careers Network took place at Environ2024, which include a short Q&A with a "later stage" researcher followed by short breakout session in small groups. The aim was to highlight the benefit of being within the network, and what members would like to see from it. I hope this network will continue to grow over the next number of years, thanks to the efforts of ESAI council members Nicola Watson and Padraig McDonagh.

Over the summer period we saw the return of the ESAI undergraduate of the year. In 2024 we saw 12 students nominated by 6 universities. These students excelled in environmental engineering at undergraduate level. It is wonderful to see the width and breath of projects undertaken in the environmental field. The future of environmental research looks bright. We would like to extend our special thanks to all the college liaison officers who worked with us and organised the Level 7 and Level 8 nominees for their university.

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Thanks to Dr Liam McCarton, Dr John Gallagher and Dr Sara Meehan for co-ordinating the "ESAI Postgraduate Researcher of the Year Award". The applications from postgraduates were evaluated according to the criteria: [1] Scientific excellence and originality; [2] Impact economic/environmental/ societal) and; [3] Dissemination (conferences, outreach, media). Congratulations to the winner Jeovan Araujo. Jeovan's project is entitled "Towards Circularity for Petroleum- and Bio-Based Plastics: Tailoring Properties and End-of-Life Routes". Please come along to see Jeovan present his research at the ESAI AGM on Tuesday March 11th at 5.15pm.

A key ESAI meeting was held in November 2024 and again in February 2025 to decide on future strategy. We would like to be the association of choice for environmental researchers on the island of Ireland and to improve the knowledge transfer between the research community and society at large. We also aim to provide the best networking opportunities for environmental science research. From this we hope to reach out to those who work in industry, policy, local government and government agencies to help us to promote the excellent research work that is undertaken on the Island of Ireland.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Niamh Power', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Niamh Power, ESAI Chairperson

Annual Review 2024

On behalf of all the team at the ESAI we would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank Environ 2024 conference convenor Dr Graece Tan and all the SETU team on the Waterford campus for hosting Environ and for assembling a very comprehensive programme, which provided an excellent platform for Environmental Researchers to showcase their work. We also wish to thank Dr Sara Meehan for providing excellent administrative support to the event as always.



One of the highlights of the Environ conference is the panel discussion open to the public, where the science community gets to discuss environmental issues pertinent to the region. In 2024, this event was again, well supported by the scientific community and wider public. The Panel discussion was on 'How to Run your Business Sustainably' and the panel consisted of Enda Buckley, Director of Sustainability, Carbery Group; Ben Dallaghan, Project Manager, Bord Iascaigh Mhara; Mark Stafford, Nature & Sustainability Manager, Danone; Kieran Ryan, Energy & Sustainability Lead, MSD Ireland; Malio Power, Managing Director, Monkey Reusable Product Ltd; and chaired by Tess Ames, Ocular Therapeutics Research Group Manager. Speakers from different fields discussed what their companies are doing sustainably for the environment, from renewable energy to material choice, with great engagement and interest from the general public. Presentations from the panel were followed by a lively questions-and-answer session on the current and future actions that companies can take, lessons learned from implementing sustainable practices, to the unexpected benefits in addition to the expected benefits.



Annual Review 2024

ESAI Prizegiving

The quality of research presented at Environ 2024 was exceptional with 95 oral presentations, 56 poster presentations, 151 abstracts and 254 delegates over the three days. The fact that the vast majority were delivered by young scientists and engineers bodes well for the future of environmental sciences in Ireland. Congratulations to all the winners in the ESAI Environ Student Presentation competition which featured ten awards this year. Special mention to Ultan O'Donnell, UCD for winning the ESAI Best Oral Presentation for his work on the 'Impacts of Weather and Human Intervention on Historical Forestry Pest Outbreaks on the Island of Ireland' and to Tapiwa Nyakauru, SETU Waterford for winning the ESAI Best Poster Presentation for his work on 'Expression and functional characterization of recombinant metallo-thionein proteins of water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*) and water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) in *E. coli*'.



Annual Review 2024

Early Careers Network

In September 2023 the Postgraduate Network changed its name to the Early Careers Network. The Early Careers Network will include researchers and those in industry and the cut-off point is 5 years post PhD and Masters. This change was brought about through the dedication of two of our council members Nicola Watson and Pdraig McDonagh. This change is in recognition of the role of post-docs and early career researchers in mentoring and guiding postgraduate students, it also stems from a need to feel part of a research community. Under the ESAI this Early Careers Network will bring together researchers under the umbrella environmental theme. The need of researchers to come together to take part in inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary teams is more important now than ever. And this multi-disciplinary aspect is very strong within the ESAI. A meeting of the Early Career Network took place at Environ2024, including a short Q&A with a "later stage" researcher followed by short breakout session in small groups. The aim was to highlight the benefit of being within the network, and what members would like to see from it. In 2025, the ESAI along with the Early Career Network expects to publish a newsletter dedicated to highlighting the work of early career researchers.

ESAI HEI Undergraduate of the Year Award 2023/24

Commencing in 2017 and now in its 8th Year, the ESAI Undergraduate of the Year Award continues to be significant on the Island of Ireland. In 2024 we received 12 nominations from 6 universities and 3rd level institutes across the Island. Well done to all the students who received nominations for excelling at environmental research at undergraduate level. The future looks bright. The ESAI would like to thank the college liaisons for their support in running this initiative each year. The following students were awarded ESAI Undergraduate of the Year: Cormac Harte (Level 8, ATU Donegal), Aoife Hillman-Allen (Level 8, ATU Sligo), Samuel O'Donnell (Level 8, ATU Galway), Grainne Mulcahy (Level 8, MTU Cork), Tara Lawton (Level 7, MTU), Aislinn Hare (Level 8, MTU Kerry), Katie Fallon (Level 8, SETU Waterford), Darren Mc Donald (Level 8, SETU Carlow), Caitlin Chapman (Level 7, SETU Carlow), Clara Hurley (Level 8, Trinity College Dublin), Aine Purcell, (Level 8, University College Cork), Olivia Philo (Level 8, University of Galway)



Annual Review 2024

ESAI Grassroots Award Scheme

The grassroots award, sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), has funded a total of eight successful workshops since 2015. The ESAI are delighted to announce that the EPA have announced that they are to support another four workshops under this scheme. Special thanks to the EPA for their continued support. Details of the scheme can be accessed on our website www.esaiweb.org. You can also access videos from previous winners. There will be a rolling call for future grassroots workshops so if you have an idea for a workshop consider applying.

Communications

ESAI members are the core of the organisation, and the communications team is led by Dr. John Gallagher, TCD. We welcome your input and participation through our social media channels whether through our Email, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or by subscribing to our Newsletters. At the end of 2024 the ESAI had 710 members, comprising of 225 full members and 485 student members. Social media reach has increased marginally on social media platforms during 2024 now with >10,300 connections and an increase of 2.9% (+292) LinkedIn connections in 2024, twitter has reduced its following by 2.4% (-84) to ~3,400 followers, and similar numbers of Facebook friends (~2,800) have been maintained. The newsletter readers and e-mailing list have increased by 17% (296+) (1996 subscribers) and 9.6% (150 mailees), recognising growth in these means of communication in 2024.

A review of communications and the ESAI website is continuing, with costs to revamp and streamline systems and processes is proving to be expensive. However, council members review our communication and website requirements on an on-going basis.

ESAI Council Meeting and AGM

The ESAI had a busy year in 2024, with two Council meetings and an AGM. The AGM was convened to coincide with Environ 2024 and therefore held in SETU Waterford Campus. This AGM saw the re-election of a number of council members but also the election of new members. We are delighted to welcome the new ESAI Council members: Dr. Sarah Murnaghan (DKIT), Dr. Junli (Lily) Xu (UCD), and Dr. Rajat Nag (UCD). Additionally, we extend a warm welcome to Dr. Christopher McEleneay a past host of ENVIRON2023. A special thank you to Dr. Junli (Lily) Xu and Dr. Rajat Nag for hosting ENVIRON 2025—we greatly appreciate your efforts and dedication. We look forward to working together and value your contributions to the Council

Annual Review 2024

Administration support

As we reflect on 2024, we want to express our sincere gratitude to Sara Meehan for stepping into the role of ESAI Administrator with such dedication and efficiency. Over the past year, Sara has been instrumental in ensuring the smooth running of ESAI, handling queries, coordinating activities, and providing invaluable support to the Council and the wider ESAI community. Her commitment and professionalism have been truly appreciated, and it has been a pleasure working with her. Thank you, Sara, for all your hard work and contributions to ESAI throughout 2024.

On a personal level, I would like to take a moment to sincerely acknowledge the passion, professionalism, and unwavering commitment of the entire ESAI Council. The collective expertise, dedication, and enthusiasm within this group have been truly wonderful. The wealth of knowledge, guidance, and support I have received throughout the year has been invaluable, and I am so grateful for the collaborative spirit and shared vision that drive our work. This is a lovely community to be part of and it has been a privilege to be part of such a committed team. I look forward to continuing our efforts together in the years ahead. Thank you all for your dedication to ESAI and to fostering a stronger environmental community.



Dr. Niamh Power, ESAI Chairperson

Niamh is a Principal Investigator within in Sustainable Infrastructure Research & Innovation Group and an Academic Developer with the N-TUTORR project.

Making the most of your membership

Benefits of Membership

By becoming a member of ESAI, you will also have access to:

- One of the largest environmental research networks on the Island of Ireland.
- Discounted rates at Environ, the annual Irish Environmental Researchers Colloquium, one of the major activities of the Association. It is now one of the largest national scientific meetings in Ireland attracting up to 300 delegates each year.
- Discounted rates for selected workshops, seminars, further education courses and conferences.
- Access to ESAI listserv
- Eligibility to apply for ESAI Postgraduate Researcher of the Year Award
- Eligibility to apply for ESAI Undergraduate Researcher of the Year Award
- Eligibility to apply for ESAI Grassroots Workshop Funding
- Learn from others and absorb best practice
- Raise the profile of you and your business
- Stimulate new business opportunities
- Innovate and commercialise new products and services
- Members of ESAI will receive free-of-charge E-Newsletters, Environews.
- Sponsorship opportunities

Handy Links For Staying Informed

- Find out more about ESAI Goals and Objectives
<https://www.esaiweb.org/home/about-us/>
- Keeping in touch with the ESAI
<https://www.esaiweb.org/stay-connected/>
- Further information on ESAI Code of Ethics and Constitution
<https://www.esaiweb.org/home/our-policies/>

2024 Events

Date	Event
January 23rd	Environ 2024 Registration and Call for abstracts opens
February 29th	Grassroots The 2023 recipient of the Grassroots Award, Brakemi Egbedi hosts Blue Economy Workshop
March 1st	ESAI Grassroots Workshop Support Scheme Sponsored by EPA – Rolling Call
March 25th - 27th	Environ 2024 – 34th Annual Irish Environmental Researchers Colloquium SETU Waterford
March 26th	ESAI AGM 2024 (Held in conjunction with Environ 2024) All members welcome
April 30th	ESAI Grassroots Workshop Support Scheme Sponsored by EPA – Rolling Call
June 3rd	ESAI Undergraduate of Year Awards 2023/24 Review with HEI's commences
June 30th	ESAI Grassroots Workshop Support Scheme Sponsored by EPA – Rolling Call
August 31st	ESAI Grassroots Workshop Support Scheme Sponsored by EPA – Rolling Call
September 17th	ESAI HEI nominated Undergraduate of Year 2023/24 Announcements and presentation of certificates (by post!)
October 18th	Undergraduate Membership Offer Free Membership for all Undergraduate Members Scheme Rolled Out
October 31st	ESAI Grassroots Workshop Support Scheme Sponsored by EPA – Rolling Call
October 31st	ESAI Postgraduate Researcher of Year Award Closing date for applications
December 31st	ESAI Grassroots Workshop Support Scheme Sponsored by EPA – Rolling Call

ENVIRON 2025 University College Dublin (UCD)

ESAI INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT 2024

ESAI Income and Expenditure Account	€	€
For the year ended 31 December 2024		12,754
Opening balance as 01/01/24		
Income	€	€
Membership	1,702	
Environ 2025 – Delegate Fee	4,962	
Environ 2024 – Delegate Fee	30,172	
Environ 2025 - Sponsorship	1,000	
Environ 2024 - Sponsorship	27,456	
Prizes	2,250	
Rebate	-	
Other accrued income	73	
Total Income	67,616	
Expenditure	€	€
Environ 2025	4,222	
Environ 2024	26,640	
Environ 2022	4,335	
Prizes	2,750	
Website Maintenance	1,203	
Administration	15,706	
Travel	-	
Accountancy	246	
Bank Charges	1,532	
Merchant Banking	210	
Postage/Stationary	634	
Grassroots	600	
Other	280	
Total Expenditure	57,383	
Excess Expenditure over Income		10,233
Closing Balance @ 31/12/24		22,987

End of Year accounts are overseen and approved by external accountant

ENVIRON 2025 University College Dublin (UCD)

ESAI Council Members 2024

Chairperson	Dr Niamh Power	chairperson@esaiweb.org
Honorary Secretary	Dr Philip Shine	secretary@esaiweb.org
Honorary Treasurer	Dr Thomaé Kakouli-Duarte	treasurer@esaiweb.org
Communications Officer	Dr John Gallagher	communications@esaiweb.org
Editor	Ms Caroline Wynne	c.wynne@epa.ie
Conference Coordinator 2025	Dr Rajat Nag and Dr Junli Xu	University College Dublin
Conference Coordinator 2024	Dr Graece Tan	SETU Waterford
Regular Members	Prof Frances Lucy – ATU Dr Tom Curran - UCD Dr Dorothy Stewart - EPA Mr Liam McCarton - TU Dublin Dr Sarah Murnaghan – DKIT Dr Christopher McEleney - ATU Donegal	
Postgraduate Representatives	Nicola Watson - Ulster University Padraig McDonagh - ATU Donegal	earlycareers@esaiweb.org
Membership Officer	c/o Dr Sara Meehan - Administrator	administrator@esaiweb.org
