



ESAI ANNUAL REVIEW 2025

ESAI Chairpersons Address from Dr. Niamh Power



The Environmental Sciences Association of Ireland (ESAI) has been involved in a number of activities throughout 2025 and we will continue this throughout 2026. This end of year report summarises some of the key events and activities throughout 2025.

The highlight of the past year was our Environmental Researchers Colloquium (Environ). The 2025 Environ conference was hosted in collaboration between the ESAI and University College Dublin. This Environ focused on the theme of "One Health for a Sustainable Future". The event took place from the 10th to 12th of March 2025, at its traditional calendar slot of the Easter timeframe.

Environ 2025 commenced on the morning of Monday 10th of March with three interactive workshop on 'Coastal Resilience through Nature-based Solutions', 'HOLOSIE to HOLOSEU: A Digital Solution for Sustainable and Low-Carbon Farming' and, 'Sensor and IoT Solutions for Environmental Applications'. In addition to these workshop there was a visit to UCD Rosemount Environmental Research Station which was very well received. Later that evening saw a lively public engagement panel discussion on 'Your Sustainable Shopping list- how can you engage in more

environmentally conscious shopping', which was open to the public. The panel discussion was expertly chair by Dr. Tom Curran from UCD and speakers from different fields discussed simple ways to make our shopping list more sustainable. A huge thank you to all our panel members on the night Miriam Keegan, Afric O'Sullivan, Pat Kane and Ciara Coleman from Vision Ireland, 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 Rajat Nag, Dr. Junli Xu, Fiona Quinn and Prof. Paula Bourke and their team for hosting Environ 2025 at UCD. The colloquium in Dublin was a huge success and extremely well organised.

A meeting of the Early Careers Network took place at Environ 2025, which included a session on the grassroots and getting young researchers collaborating. 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 for driving this initiative.

ESAI Chairpersons Address from Dr. Niamh Power

Over the summer period we saw the return of the ESAI undergraduate of the year. In 2025 we saw 12 students nominated by 8 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. This year we also launched the Taught Postgraduate of the Year Award, this award is to recognise students who undertake environmental research as part of a taught programme. In 2025 we saw 3 students nominated by 3 universities and we would like to see this number grow in 2026. We would like to extend our special thanks to all the college liaison officers who worked with us and organised the Level 7, Level 8 and taught Level 9 nominees for their university.

Thanks to Dr Chris McEleney, 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: [1] Scientific excellence and originality; [2] Impact economic/environmental/ societal) and; [3] Dissemination (conferences, outreach, media). Congratulations to the winner Morad Mirzaei from Trinity College Dublin. Morad Mirzaei's project is entitled "Assessing the role of multi-species swards in mitigating carbon and greenhouse gas emissions from intensively managed grasslands in Ireland". Please come along to see Morad present his research at the ESAI AGM on Tuesday April 28th at 5.00pm.

A key ESAI meeting was held in November 2025 and again in February 2026 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.



Dr. Niamh Power, ESAI Chairperson

Annual Review 2025

Environ 2025

On behalf of all the team at the ESAI we would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank Environ 2025 conference convenor Dr Rajat Nag, Dr. Junli Xu, Fiona Quinn and Prof. Paula Bourke and all the UCD team 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 2025, this event was again, well supported by the scientific community and wider public. The Panel discussion was on 'Your Sustainable Shopping list- how can you engage in more environmentally conscious shopping ' and the panel consisted of Miriam Keegan - founder of sew_sustainable, Pat Kane - founder and CEO of reuzi. ie, Ciara Coleman - Vision Ireland, Dr Aifric O'Sullivan - Associate Professor, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science and the evening was chaired by Dr Tom Curran - Associate Professor and Vice Principal for Internationalisation in UCD College of Engineering & Architecture. Speakers from different fields discussed their approaches to sustainable shopping, from material choice, to repurposing to supporting charity shops, 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 individuals and companies can take, lessons learned from implementing sustainable practices, to the unexpected benefits in addition to the expected benefits. Also included was an optional "Sewing Workshop" with Miriam Keegan, which was a first for the ESAI.



Annual Review 2025

ESAI Prizegiving

The quality of research presented at Environ 2025 was exceptional with 270 delegates, 144 abstracts over the 3 days there with 87 oral presentations, and 57 poster presentations with 26 of these opting to give a 5 minute presentation on their poster. 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 Sarah Nasr, UCD for winning the ESAI Best Oral Presentation for her work on the 'Predicting River Water Temperature using Machine Learning' and to Megan Olley, ATU Galwy for winning the ESAI Best Poster Presentation for her work on 'Exposure to bioplastic leachates impacts growth of freshwater green algae'.



Annual Review 2025

Postgraduate Researcher of the Year Award 2025: 13th Year of Competition / €500 Award

The Postgraduate Researcher of the Year Award 2025, now in its thirteenth year and valued at €500, was awarded to Morad Mirzaei of Trinity College Dublin, under the supervision of Dr. Matthew Saunders. His research, titled "Assessing the role of multi-species swards in mitigating carbon and greenhouse gas emissions from intensively managed grasslands in Ireland," the project tackles the pressing challenge of improving the sustainability of Irish grasslands, given that agriculture accounts for approximately 38% of national greenhouse gas emissions and grasslands are major sources of these emissions. With current emission estimates remaining uncertain, particularly concerning multispecies swards and nitrogen management, Mirzaei's work investigates how diverse grassland systems and improved nitrogen use practices can reduce gaseous emissions and enhance soil carbon sequestration when compared with traditional ryegrass-based systems.



ESAI HEI Undergraduate and Taught

Postgraduate of the Year Award 2024/25

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 2025

ESAI Grassroots Award Scheme

The grassroots funding award, sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), has funded a total of ten successful workshops since 2015. In July 2025 a workshop organised by Grace Maher (SETU) on 'The potential of Heritage Wheat as a Crop for Organic Cultivation' took place on Knocknagee Organic Farm & Shankill Castle. The workshop struck a lovely balance between a participatory event, stakeholder outreach and science. 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. It is anticipated that in 2026 we will see additional workshops coming on-line as a total of 6 workshops were funded in 2025 including two upcoming collaboration workshops between students, researchers and campuses- highlighting the work to the Early Career Network. 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 who is stepping down from his role in 2026. 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 2025 our communication reach has remained relatively stable in the last 12 months, with marginal overall growth through our suite of different communication avenues. On our social and professional media platforms during 2025, LinkedIn has grown by 6% (700 new connections) and now sits just under 11,000 connections. X followers have reduced by ~4%, but still sits at a strong ~3,260 followers, and similar numbers of Facebook friends (~2,800) have been maintained. The newsletter readers and Listserver mailing list have marginally increased marginally by 3% (now 2040 subscribers) and 9.6% (150 mailees), recognising growth in these means of communication in 2025.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. John Gallagher for his dedication over the last number in leading the ESAI communication efforts. His dedication has led to an increase in interactions across the board.

A review of communications and the ESAI website is continuing, with costs to revamp and streamline systems and processes proving to be expensive, but additional quotes are being sought in 2026. However, council members will review our communication and website requirements on an on-going basis.

Annual Review 2025

ESAI Council Meeting and AGM

The ESAI had a busy year in 2025, with three Council meetings and an AGM. The AGM was convened to coincide with Environ 2025 and therefore held in UCD. This AGM saw Tom Curran stepped down from council and we would like to acknowledge his contribution over the years. We also saw Philip Shine stepped down as secretary but stayed on as ordinary member, 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 Hammond Antwi Sarpong (DKIT) who will be Environ 2026 conference co-convenor along with Dr Sarah Murnaghan - we greatly appreciate your efforts and dedication. We look forward to working together and value your contributions to the Council.

Administration support

As we reflect on 2025, we want to express our sincere gratitude to Sara Meehan for performing 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 2025.

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 Lecturer and Principal Investigator within the Sustainable Infrastructure Research & Innovation Group, Munster Technological University.

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/>

2025 Events

Date	Event
January 13th	Environ 2025 Call for abstracts closes
February 31st	ESAI Grassroots Workshop Support Scheme Sponsored by EPA – Rolling Call
March 10th - 12th	Environ 2025 – 35th Annual Irish Environmental Researchers Colloquium University College Dublin
March 11th	ESAI AGM 2025 (Held in conjunction with Environ 2025) All members welcome
April 30th	ESAI Grassroots Workshop Support Scheme Sponsored by EPA – Rolling Call
June 3rd	ESAI Undergraduate of Year Awards 2024/25 Review with HEI's commences
June 30th	ESAI Grassroots Workshop Support Scheme Sponsored by EPA – Rolling Call
July 29th	Grassroots The 2025 recipient of the Grassroots Award, Grace Maher SETU hosts The Potential of Heritage Wheat as a Crop for Organic Cultivation
August 31st	ESAI Grassroots Workshop Support Scheme Sponsored by EPA – Rolling Call
September 17th	ESAI HEI nominated Undergraduate of Year 2024/25 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
November 12th	ESAI Early Careers Network Newsletter Special edition showcasing research from our early career members
November 30th	ESAI Postgraduate Researcher of Year Award Closing date for applications
Decemberr 31st	ESAI Grassroots Workshop Support Scheme Sponsored by EPA – Rolling Call

ESAI INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT 2025

ESAI Income and Expenditure Account		
For the year ended 31 December 2024		
Opening balance as 01/01/25		22,987
Income	€	€
Membership	2,493	
Environ 2025 – Delegate Fee	0	
Environ 2024 – Delegate Fee	29,800	
Environ 2025 - Sponsorship	4,500	
Environ 2024 - Sponsorship	19,150	
Grassroots	3,000	
Prizes	2,250	
Rebate	977	
Other accrued income	490	
Total Income	62,600	
Expenditure	€	€
Environ 2026	2,090	
Environ 2025	21,445	
Prizes	2,750	
Website Maintenance	1,228	
Administration	20,886	
Travel	-	
Accountancy	0	
Bank Charges	2,515	
Insurance	1,050	
Postgrad Prize	500	
Grassroots	644	
Rebates	1,089	
Less accrued website and overpayment	1,355	
Total Expenditure	55,281	
Excess Expenditure over Income		7,379
Closing Balance @ 31/12/25		30,366

End of Year accounts are overseen and approved by external accountant

ESAI Council Members 2025

Chairperson	Dr Niamh Power	chairperson@esaiweb.org
Honorary Secretary	Dr. Chris McEleney	secretary@esaiweb.org
Honorary Treasurer	Dr Thomaé Kakouli-Duarte	treasurer@esaiweb.org
Communications Officer	Dr John Gallagher	communications@esaiweb.org
Editor	Dr Caroline Wynne	c.wynne@epa.ie
Conference Coordinator 2026	Dr Sarah Murnaghan & Dr Hammond Antwi Sarpong	DkIT
Conference Coordinator 2025	Dr Rajat Nag and Dr Junli Xu	University College Dublin
Regular Members	Prof Frances Lucy – ATU Dr Philip Shine – Map of Ag Dr Dorothy Stewart - EPA Mr Liam McCarton - TU Dublin Dr Christopher McEleney - ATU Donegal Dr Graece Tan – SETU Waterford	
Postgraduate Representatives	Nicola Watson - Ulster University Padraig McDonagh - ATU Donegal	earlycareers@esaiweb.org
Membership Officer	c/o Dr Sara Meehan - Administrator	administrator@esaiweb.org
