



**An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta**
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



Candidate Information Booklet

Open competition for the appointment to the position of:

Researcher–
Irish Soil Moisture Observation Network
(Fixed term Contract)

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Met Éireann

Closing Date: Friday, 18th of July 2025

Please read carefully

Title of Position	Researcher (Irish Soil Moisture Observation Network)
Department	Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Division	Met Éireann
Location	Met Éireann HQ (Dublin) / Cahersiveen (Kerry) / Shannon Airport (Claire)
Tenure	Fixed term contract – 2 years (with possible extension up to 2 years)

Introduction

The recently established Irish Soil Moisture Monitoring Network (ISMON) will significantly enhance soil moisture monitoring in Ireland. The project was initially funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) under the national Carbon Tax Fund. This initiative aims to enhance Ireland's capability to monitor soil moisture conditions in real time and over the long term. ISMON consists of 10 sites equipped with state-of-the-art Cosmic-Ray Neutron Sensor technology, covering major soil types, land uses, and climatic regimes in Ireland. This project is a collaborative effort led by University College Dublin (UCD), Met Éireann, and Teagasc.

The Global Climate Observing System has declared soil moisture as one of the Essential Climate Variable (ECV). Soil moisture is a critical driver of various soil processes, influencing both agricultural productivity and environmental outcomes. Accurate soil moisture data is essential for understanding plant growth, greenhouse gas emissions, nutrient losses, and soil carbon dynamics. It is especially vital for nutrient management to minimise nitrate/phosphate leaching to protect water quality. With climate change expected to increase weather variability and extremes in Ireland, improving the understanding and forecasting of soil moisture conditions is imperative for mitigating and adapting to future climate changes.

The ISMON long-term observation platform will significantly enhance the understanding of the water cycle, improving short- and medium-term weather prediction. The data will support various applications, including soil and water quality protection, greenhouse gas emission mitigation, flood and fire forecasting, and risk management. ISMON will also provide crucial validation data for soil moisture prediction models, enhancing the reliability of severe weather and long-term climate change forecasts.

ISMON consists of ten stations across Ireland where soil moisture conditions are monitored using soil moisture probe arrays and state-of-the-art cosmic ray neutron sensors. These sensors can measure soil moisture conditions over large areas, approximately 0.6 hectares. ISMON will place Ireland at the forefront of soil moisture monitoring and modelling and aims to integrate with existing networks like the Teagasc Agricultural Catchments Programme, the National Agricultural Soil Carbon Observatory (NASCO) network, the Terrain-AI project, and other initiatives.

1. Job Description:

The Researcher will support the monitoring of the Irish Soil Moisture Observation Network (ISMON). This role will involve data analysis, the harmonization of datasets and the integration of data from various monitoring networks including CRNS, Gamma Ray and in situ soil moisture observations

Field Data Collection: The Researcher will be responsible for conducting regular field visits to the 10 ISMON sites across Ireland. Regular soil sampling to ground-truth Cosmic-Ray Neutron Sensor (CRNS) data will also be required.

Data Management and Analysis: A significant part of the Researcher's role will involve processing and analysing the soil moisture data collected from the field. They will use various software tools and scripts (e.g., R, Python, Excel) to clean, organise, and analyse data, ensuring high data quality and integrity. The Researcher will collect all necessary metadata for each station and maintain accurate records of all data collection and processing activities.

Support for Integration and Harmonization: The Researcher will support the Senior Research Fellow in integrating soil moisture data with other existing monitoring networks, such as the Teagasc Agricultural Catchments Programme, NASCO network, and Terrain-AI project. This involves contributing to the development and implementation of standardized measurement techniques and protocols to ensure consistency and comparability of data across different networks.

Reporting and Communication: The Researcher will assist in preparing comprehensive reports and presentations for both internal and external stakeholders. They will communicate findings and progress updates to the Agricultural Meteorologist of Met Eireann and other team members and participate in meetings and discussions related to ISMON activities. Additionally, the Researcher will contribute to the dissemination of research findings through newsletters, scientific publications, and conferences.

2. Principal Tasks

Data Collection and Fieldwork:

- Collect and update metadata for all ISMON sites.
- Collect soil samples to ground-truth CRNS data at ISMON sites.
- Monitor data collection and data quality

Data Management and Analysis:

- Maintain accurate records of data collection and processing activities.
- Process and analyse soil moisture data collected from the field.

- Use software tools (e.g., R, Python, Excel) for data quality control and analysis.
- Assist in harmonizing data from different sources and ensuring data quality.

Support for Integration and Harmonization:

- Assist in integrating soil moisture data with other monitoring networks.
- Support the development and implementation of standard measurement techniques.
- Contribute to the preparation of datasets for research and operational use.

Reporting and Communication:

- Assist in preparing reports and presentations for internal and external stakeholders.
- Communicate findings and progress updates
- Participate in meetings and discussions related to ISMON activities.

Working Environment:

The Researcher will be required to work in one of Met Éireann's locations (HQ, Glasnevin, Cahersiveen, Shannon Airport). Where possible, the successful candidates may be authorised to work remotely in line with approved policies for workplace attendance.

Educational, professional or technical qualifications, knowledge, skills, aptitudes, experience, training:

a) ESSENTIAL for the job

1. A Degree/Master's in Environmental Science, Meteorology, Hydrology, Soil Science, Geography or a related field.
2. Experience in data collection, fieldwork, and the use of environmental monitoring equipment.
3. Strong analytical skills and experience with data processing and analysis.
4. Proficiency in using software tools for data analysis (e.g., R, Python, Excel).
5. Effective communication skills, both oral and written.
6. Ability to work independently and as part of a team.
7. Attention to detail and strong organizational skills.
8. Candidates must possess a valid full driver's license to be considered for this position.

b) DESIRABLE (but not essential) for the job

1. Experience with soil moisture monitoring equipment and techniques.
2. Experience in project management and coordinating field activities.
3. Knowledge of data harmonization and integration techniques.
4. Understanding of climate and environmental science as it relates to soil moisture and agricultural systems.

ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY AND CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS ON ELIGIBILITY

Eligible candidates must be:

1. A citizen of the European Economic Area (EEA). The EEA consists of the Member States of the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway; or
2. A citizen of the United Kingdom (UK); or
3. A citizen of Switzerland pursuant to the agreement between the EU and Switzerland on the free movement of persons; or
4. A non-EEA citizen who has a stamp 4 permission¹ or a Stamp 5 permission

To qualify candidates must meet one of the citizenship criteria above by the date of any job offer.

Non-EEA applicants are welcome under the “Fast Track Work Permit for Non-EU R&D (Hosting Agreement) Scheme”. See for [here](#) more information. Should this scheme and its conditions apply, a Hosting Agreement can be put in place between the applicant and the employer. Non-EEA applicants are responsible for ensuring they can secure a visa to travel to Ireland, if applicable.

Incentivised Scheme for Early Retirement (ISER)

It is a condition of the Incentivised Scheme for Early Retirement (ISER) as set out in Department of Finance Circular 12/09 that retirees, under that Scheme, are debarred from applying for another position in the same employment or the same sector. Therefore, such retirees may not apply for this position.

Department of Health and Children Circular (7/2010)

The Department of Health Circular 7/2010 dated 1 November 2010 introduced a Targeted Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) Scheme and Voluntary Redundancy Schemes (VRS). It is a condition of the VER scheme that persons availing of the scheme will not be eligible for re-employment in the public health sector or in the wider public service or in a body wholly or mainly funded from public moneys. The same prohibition on re-employment applies under the VRS, except that the prohibition is for a period of 7 years, after which time any re-employment will require the approval of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. People who availed of either of these schemes are not eligible to compete in this competition.

Collective Agreement: Redundancy Payments to Public Servants

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform letter dated 28th June 2012 to Personnel Officers introduced, with effect from 1st June 2012, a Collective Agreement which had been reached between the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Public Services Committee of the ICTU in relation to ex-gratia Redundancy Payments to Public Servants. It is a condition of the Collective Agreement that persons availing of the agreement will not be eligible for re-employment in the public service by any public service body (as defined by the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts 2009 – 2011) for a period of 2 years from termination of the employment. Thereafter the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform will be required prior to re-employment. People who availed of this scheme and who may be successful in this competition will have to prove

¹ Please note that a 50 TEU permission, which is a replacement for Stamp 4EUFAM after Brexit, is acceptable as a Stamp 4 equivalent.

their eligibility (expiry of period of non-eligibility) and the Minister's consent will have to be secured prior to employment by any public service body.

Declaration

Applicants will be required to declare whether they have previously availed of a public service scheme of incentivised early retirement and/or the collective agreement outlined above. Applicants will also be required to declare any entitlements to a Public Service pension benefit (in payment or preserved) from any other Public Service employment and/or where they have received a payment-in-lieu in respect of service in any Public Service employment.

Principal Conditions of Service

General:

The appointment is subject to the Civil Service Regulations Acts 1956 to 2005 and the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004 and any other Act for the time being in force relating to the Civil Service.

Pay: On appointment €46,647, after 1 year €50,927

Important Note

Payment will be made fortnightly in arrears by Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) into a bank account of an officer's choice. Payment cannot be made until a BIC code and IBAN number and bank sort code has been supplied to the Personnel Section of the relevant Department or Office. Statutory deductions from salary will be made as appropriate by the Department/Office.

An officer will agree that any overpayment of salary or of travel and subsistence may be deducted from future salary payments due to an officer in accordance with the Payment of Wages Act 1991. In accordance with that Act, the Department/Office will advise the officer in writing of the amount and details of such overpayment and give at least one week's notice of the deduction to take place and will deduct the overpayment, at an amount that is fair and reasonable having regard to all the circumstances, within six months of such notice in accordance with the Act.

Tenure and probation:

The appointment is to a **temporary** unestablished position in the civil service for a period of 2 years. An extension of up to 2 further years is possible, dependent on a successful review.

The appointee will be required to serve a 6-month probationary period.

During the period of the probationary contract, an officer's performance will be subject to review by the appropriate supervisor(s) to determine whether the officer:

- I. has performed in a satisfactory manner
- II. has been satisfactory in general conduct, and
- III. is suitable from the viewpoint of health with particular regard to sick leave.

Prior to completion of the probationary contract a decision will be made as to whether or not the officer will be retained pursuant to *Section 5A(2) Civil Service Regulation Acts 1956-2005*. This decision will be based on the officer's performance assessed against the criteria set out in (i) to (iii) above.

The details of the probationary process will be explained to you by your employing Department and you will be given a copy of guidelines on probation issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

In the event that an officer is not considered as suitable to the position having been assessed against stated criteria, the officer will be notified in writing of the action to be taken prior to the expiry of the probationary contract and any extensions thereof.

Notwithstanding the preceding paragraphs in this section, the probationary contract may be terminated at any time prior to the expiry of the term of the contract by either side in accordance with the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts, 1973 to 2005.

In the following circumstances a contract may be extended and a probation period suspended.

- The probationary period stands suspended when an employee is absent due to Maternity or Adoptive Leave.
- In relation to an employee absent on Parental Leave or Carers Leave, the employer may require probation to be suspended if the absence is not considered to be consistent with the continuation of the probation and
- Any other statutory provision providing that probation shall -
 - (i) stand suspended during an employee's absence from work, and
 - (ii) be completed by the employee on the employee's return from work after such absence.

Where probation is suspended the employer should notify the employee of the circumstances relating to the suspension.

Unfair Dismissals Act 1977 - 2015:

The Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977-2015 will not apply to the termination of this employment by reason only of the expiry of this probationary contract without it being renewed.

Duties:

The officer will be required to perform any duties appropriate to the position which may be assigned from time to time. The position is full time and the officer may not engage in private practice or be connected with any outside business which would interfere with the performance of official duties.

Headquarters:

The officer's headquarters will be such as may be designated from time to time by the Director. When absent from home and headquarters on duty appropriate travelling expenses and subsistence allowances will be paid, subject to the normal civil service regulations and the guidelines of Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Hours of attendance:

Hours of attendance will be as fixed from time to time but will amount, on average, to not less than 35 hours net of lunch breaks. Flexibility may be required with regard to extra attendance from time to time. The rate of remuneration payable for any exceptional extra attendance will be in line with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circulars.

Annual Leave

On recruitment, annual leave will be 25 working days a year. This allowance, which is subject to the usual conditions regarding the granting of annual leave, is on the basis of a five-day week and is exclusive of the usual public holidays

The Organisation of Working Time Act:

The terms of the organisation of Working Time Act, 1997 will apply, where appropriate, to this employment.

Sick Leave:

Pay during properly certified sick absence, provided there is no evidence of permanent disability for service, will apply on a pro-rata basis, in accordance with the provisions of the sick leave circulars as amended from time to time.

Officers, who will be paying the Class A rate of PRSI, will be required to sign a mandate authorising the Department of Social Protection to pay any benefits due under the Social Welfare Acts direct to the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. Payment of salary during illness will be subject to the officer making the necessary claims for social insurance benefit to the Department of Social Protection within the required time limits.

Secrecy, confidentiality and standards of behaviours:**Official Secrecy and Integrity**

During the term of the probationary contract, an officer will be subject to the Provisions of the Official Secrets Act, 1963, as amended by the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003. The officer will agree not to disclose to third parties any confidential information, especially information with commercial potential, either during or subsequent to the period of employment.

Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour

The officer will be subject to the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

Ethics in Public Office Act 1995

The Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 will apply, where appropriate, to this employment.

Prior approval of publications:

An officer will agree not to publish material related to his or her official duties without prior approval by the Secretary General of the Department.

Political activity:

During the term of employment the officer will be subject to the rules governing civil servants and politics.

Superannuation and Retirement

The successful candidate will be offered the appropriate superannuation terms and conditions as prevailing in the Civil Service, at the time of being offered an appointment. In general, and except for candidates who have worked in a pensionable (non-single scheme terms) public service job in the 26 weeks prior to appointment (see paragraph d below), this means being offered appointment based on membership of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme ("Single Scheme"). Key provisions attaching to membership of the Single Scheme are as follows:

a. Pensionable Age

The minimum age at which pension is payable is 66 (rising to 67 and 68) in line with State Pension age changes.

b. Retirement Age:

Scheme members must retire at the age of 70.

c. Pension Abatement

- If the appointee was previously employed in the Civil Service and is in receipt of a pension from the Civil Service normal abatement rules will apply. However, if the appointee was previously employed in the Civil Service and awarded a pension under voluntary early retirement arrangements (other than the Incentivised Scheme of Early Retirement (ISER) or the Department of Health Circular 7/2010 VER/VRS which, as indicated above, renders a person ineligible for the competition) the entitlement to that pension will cease with effect from the date of reappointment. Special arrangements will, however be made for the reckoning of previous service given by the appointee for the purpose of any future superannuation award for which the appointee may be eligible.
- If the appointee was previously employed in the Civil Service or in the Public Service please note that the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012 includes a provision which extends abatement of pension for all Civil and Public Servants who are re-employed where a Public Service pension is in payment. This provision to apply abatement across the wider public service came into effect on 1 November 2012. **This may have pension implications for any person appointed to this position who is currently in receipt of a Civil or Public Service pension or has a preserved Civil or Public Service pension which will come into payment during his/her employment in this position.**
- **Department of Education and Skills Early Retirement Scheme for Teachers Circular 102/2007**

The Department of Education and Skills introduced an Early Retirement Scheme for Teachers. It is a condition of the Early Retirement Scheme that with the exception of the situations set out in paragraphs 10.2 and 10.3 of the relevant circular documentation, and with those exceptions only, if a teacher accepts early retirement under **Strands 1, 2 or 3** of this scheme and is subsequently employed in any capacity in any area of the public sector, payment of pension to that person under the scheme **will immediately cease**. Pension payments will, however, be resumed on the ceasing of such employment or on the person's 60th birthday, whichever is the later, but on resumption, the pension will be based on the person's actual reckonable service as a teacher (i.e. the added years previously granted will not be taken into account in the calculation of the pension payment).

- **Ill-Health-Retirement**

Please note that where an individual has retired from a Civil/Public Service body on the grounds of ill-health his/her pension from that employment may be subject to review in accordance with the rules of ill-health retirement within the pension scheme of that employment.

d. Prior Public Servants

While the default pension terms, as set out in the preceding paragraphs, consist of Single Scheme membership, this may not apply to certain appointees. Full details of the conditions governing whether or not a public servant is a Single Scheme member are given in the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and other Provisions) Act 2012. However, the key exception case (in the context of this competition and generally) is that **a successful candidate who has worked in a pensionable (non-single scheme terms) capacity in the public service within 26 weeks of taking up appointment, would in general not become a member of the Single Scheme**. In this case such a candidate would instead be offered membership of the pension scheme for non-established civil servants ("Non-Established State Employee Scheme"). This would mean that the abatement provisions at (c) above would apply, and in addition there are implications in respect of pension accrual as outlined below:

e. Pension Accrual

A 40-year limit on total service that can be counted towards pension where a person has been a member of more than one existing public service pension scheme would apply. This 40-year limit, which is provided for in the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and other Provisions) Act 2012 came into effect on 28 July 2012. **This may have implications for any appointee who has acquired pension rights in a previous public service employment.**

f. Pension-Related Deduction

This appointment is subject to the pension-related deduction in accordance with the Financial Emergency Measure in the Public Interest Act 2009.

For further information in relation to the Single Public Service Pension Scheme for Public Servants please see the following website: <http://www.per.gov.ie/pensions>.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The above represents the principal conditions of service and is not intended to be the comprehensive list of all terms and conditions of employment which will be set out in the employment contract to be agreed with the successful candidate.

Competition Process

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is recruiting for this position under its Recruitment Licence issued by the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) and in accordance with the CPSA's Code of Practice.

How to Apply

Applicants should submit a completed application form to postdoc.recruitment@met.ie

The Application Form allows applicants to detail their qualifications, skills and experience and provide a personal statement outlining why they should be considered for the post and how they meet the essential requirements and personal attributes of the post.

Please note: Only applications submitted on the official application form will be considered. The application form is available on Met Éireann's website www.met.ie/about-us/vacancies.

Closing Date

The closing date for receipt of applications **Friday, 18th of July 2025 at 5pm.**

All applications will be acknowledged. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within 3 days of applying, please email postdoc.recruitment@met.ie

Essential Requirements and Personal Attributes

Candidates will be required to possess all the essential requirements and personal attributes required for the position. They will be requested to demonstrate this both in the application form and, if shortlisted, by interview.

Health

Candidates must be in a state of health such as would indicate a reasonable prospect of ability to render regular and efficient service.

Selection Process

The selection process may include the shortlisting of candidates on the basis of the application form and will include an interview.

Shortlisting

A shortlisting process will involve an expert panel that will select candidates for interview who, based on an examination of the application form and assessed against the essential requirements and personal attributes required, appear to be the most suitable for the position.

Interview

Candidates who are shortlisted will be called for interview by an expert panel. The interview will focus how the candidate meets the essential requirements and personal attributes of the post and their career and experience to date.

Note: Candidates will be notified of interview dates and arrangements at the earliest opportunity. The onus will be on candidates to make themselves available for interview as advised.

Deeming of candidature to be withdrawn

Candidates who do not attend for interview as required or who do not, when requested, furnish such evidence, as the Department requires in regard to any matter relevant to their candidature, will have no further claim to consideration.

Candidate Feedback

Feedback will be provided on written request.

Review Procedures in relation to the Selection Process

Requests for a review are dealt with in accordance with the codes of practice published by the published by the Commission for Public Service Appointments. The Codes can be accessed at www.cpsa-online.ie.

Confidentiality

Please note that all personal data shall be treated as confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003.

Candidates should note canvassing will disqualify.