

Responsible investment on the lesson plan for financial advisors

- Ireland's First Responsible Investment Advisor Course launched during Climate Finance Week
- Irish Life supports roll-out of industry wide programme to bring sustainability to the fore

Thursday, November 5: The launch of the first Responsible Investment Advisor and Responsible Investment Trustee Course in Ireland has been announced by ESG Ireland and Sustainable Finance Skillnet. The course, which is specifically tailored to financial advisors and pension trustees, is supported by Irish Life, who co-funded its creation and will be the first company to roll out the course over the coming weeks.

The Responsible Investment Advisor and Trustee Course is intended to give advisors and trustees a fundamental understanding of responsible investment. The 8-module course will focus on the importance of sustainability and practical ways of adopting a responsible investment approach, including the application of the environmental, social and governance (ESG) framework.

Vincent McCarthy CFA, Founder of ESG Ireland and the Responsible Investment Institute, said: *"While the responsible investment theme and interest in ESG has gathered momentum, the knowledge and skills gap around its real-world application is a pressing challenge. The Responsible Investment Advisor course is another step forward in taking responsible investment from being a fringe topic in the education syllabus to making it the standard. Investors are demanding a responsible investment approach and through this course, the industry will be well-equipped to respond."*

The course is being launched during Climate Finance Week 2020 which focuses on how the Irish financial services sector can drive sustainable global growth. The need to address skills development across the industry is a key theme of Climate Finance Week.

Sandra Rockett, Director of Wealth and Corporate Distribution, Irish Life Investment Managers said: *"Irish Life has been a leader in adopting responsible investment practices across our business over the last number of years and we are committed to using our position to innovate, drive positive change and enable the adoption of responsible investment practices across the financial services sector. This course is designed to increase the sustainable finance skill-base across the industry, helping financial advisors and trustees to embrace sustainability as a core principle for the benefit of the customers and pension scheme members who rely on them. We are delighted to be working with ESG Ireland and Sustainable Finance Skillnet to bring this learning to a wide audience."*

Developed by ESG Ireland®, through its Responsible Investment Institute™, the course is accredited by the Institute of Banking and supported by Sustainable Finance Skillnet with funds from the National Training Fund through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

Yvonne Holmes, Chair, Sustainable Finance Skillnet said: *"As the focus on responsible investment and ESG has grown in recent years, a knowledge and skills gap amongst financial advisers has been identified. We are finally addressing that deficit through an innovative programme developed specifically for the financial services industry and supported by Sustainable Finance Skillnet. The involvement of Irish Life has allowed us to bring this course from an idea to reality."*

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About ESG Ireland®

ESG Ireland® is an independent platform delivering thought leadership on the integration of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) factors within decision-making frameworks, across business, investments, and public policy. The core purpose of ESG Ireland® is to turn intent into action and to make Ireland a beacon for other countries to follow.

Responsible Investment Institute™ was established to address the skills gap around ESG and responsible investing, which is regularly cited by stakeholders as one of the major challenges. Our courses are focused on empowering decision makers to ask the right questions when it comes to thinking about sustainability and responsible decision making.

About Irish Life:

Irish Life is one of Ireland's leading financial services companies, now taking care of over 1.4 million customers. We help people to confidently prepare for and embrace life's changes with our wide range of health, life, pension and investment solutions.

Irish Life is part of the Great-West Lifeco group of companies, one of the world's leading life assurance organisations. Great-West Lifeco and its subsidiaries have approximately CAD\$1.4 trillion in consolidated assets under administration and are members of the Power Financial Corporation group of companies.

Irish Life delivers innovative solutions for personal and corporate customers, backed by the highest standards of service. And as part of Great-West Lifeco, we have access to experience and expertise on a global scale, so we can continuously enhance our leading range of services and solutions.

About Sustainable Finance Skillnet

The Sustainable Finance Skillnet is a national network aimed at developing leadership capacity and staff skills to advance ESG best practice across all asset classes in Ireland.

The Sustainable Finance Skillnet is co-funded by Skillnet Ireland and member companies. Skillnet Ireland is funded from the National Training Fund through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Sustainable Nation Ireland is the national promoter of the Sustainable Finance Skillnet.