

# Industrial Hemp Conference

## Speaker Biographies

### **Charles B Kovess**

Charles is a distinguished Australian thought leader, lawyer, and advocate for industrial hemp industry. With over four decades of experience in law, business, and advocacy, Charles has been instrumental in shaping Australia's approach to hemp innovation. As the founder of the Australian Hemp Masonry Company and a director of the Australian Hemp Council, he has championed the use of hemp as a sustainable, versatile material in construction, agriculture, and beyond. Charles is renowned for his expertise in regulatory frameworks, particularly in navigating the legal complexities of the hemp industry. His work has significantly contributed to advancing hemp as a solution for sustainability, climate change mitigation, and economic growth. A passionate speaker, Charles has presented at numerous international conferences, sharing his vision for a greener future through hemp innovation. Beyond his professional achievements, Charles is a published author and educator, dedicated to raising awareness about the potential of hemp. His commitment to sustainability and advocacy makes him a respected voice in the global hemp community, inspiring change and fostering collaboration across industries.

### **Edward Hanbidge (Keadeen Mountain Farms & The Hemp Farm)**

Edward Hanbidge is a dedicated Organic farmer and advocate for sustainable agriculture, working from Keadeen Mountain Farms in County Wicklow. With a strong focus on organic and regenerative practices, he has spent over a decade refining the cultivation of industrial hemp in Ireland's unique climate while also raising native Irish cattle. His farm-to-table approach ensures that customers receive high-quality organic Dexter beef, directly from the source.

Beyond livestock, Edward is deeply invested in hemp production through Hemp Tech Ireland or his brand "The Hemp Farm", where he grows and processes organic hemp to produce high-quality hemp seed oils & plant protein. His work highlights the potential of this versatile crop and its role in sensible farming.

Keadeen Mountain Farms also serves as a place for learning and engagement, offering guided tours to share insights into organic farming, hemp cultivation, and sustainability. Edward's commitment to innovation has been recognised through various industry awards, including the RDS Sustainability Award. At the Industrial Hemp Conference in Dublin, Edward will share his experiences and knowledge about growing hemp in Ireland, aiming to contribute to a more sustainable and diverse future for Irish agriculture.

[Find out more about Keadeen Mountain Farms here](#)

### **Dr. Fiona Thorne (Principal Research Officer, Teagasc)**

Dr. Fiona Thorne is a leading agricultural economist at Teagasc, Ireland's Agriculture and Food Development Authority. With over 20 years of experience, her research focuses on farm economics,

policy impacts, and sustainable land use. She holds a PhD in Agricultural Economics from UCD and has published widely on farm income, diversification, and agricultural sustainability. At the *Industrial Hemp Conference*, Dr. Thorne will discuss the economics of Irish agriculture and the potential of industrial hemp as a land use alternative for farmers. Facing environmental and economic challenges, Irish agriculture must explore innovative crops to diversify income and enhance sustainability. Her work bridges economic viability and environmental stewardship.

## Panel Discussion 1: Shaping the Future of Eco-Friendly Building

### **Barry Caslin (Teagasc)**

Barry Caslin is an Energy and Rural Development Specialist at Teagasc, Ireland's agriculture and food development authority. With extensive experience in agricultural advisory services, Barry plays a pivotal role in promoting sustainable farming practices and rural innovation. He specialises in energy efficiency, renewable energy and farm diversification, covering areas such as anaerobic digestion, solar energy, biomass, and community energy projects. As the coordinator of the Teagasc Farm Business Options programme, Barry empowers farmers and rural entrepreneurs to explore new ventures and adapt to changing market conditions. He organises impactful events, seminars, and conferences that facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration in the agricultural sector. Barry's expertise extends to international collaborations, where he contributes to EU research projects like Horizon Europe and Interreg. His involvement in initiatives such as the EU CAP Network, demonstrates his commitment to accelerating innovation in agriculture.

### **Liam Donohoe (Chief Operating Officer of UK Hempcrete)**

Liam Donohoe is the Chief Operating Officer of UK Hempcrete, a leader in sustainable, hemp-based construction materials. With over a decade of experience in eco-construction, Liam has driven innovation in low-carbon building solutions, particularly with Hempcrete, a carbon-negative material combining hemp, lime, and water. A passionate advocate for sustainable practices, he has promoted industrial hemp as a viable alternative to traditional materials, reducing carbon footprints while enhancing thermal performance and durability. Liam is also an active lecturer at Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), where he shares his expertise in sustainable construction and hemp-based solutions. He is also a SEAI-registered building energy rating (BER) certifier and energy consultant with RetroKit, who work with many of Ireland's leading retrofit specialists, Approved Housing Bodies and Local Authorities.

Through his work, he bridges industry and academia, inspiring the next generation to advance eco-friendly building practices.

[Find out more about UK Hempcrete here](#)

### **Hannah Roughneen (R&D Engineer Kingspan Ltd)**

Kingspan is a global leader in innovative construction and building materials. With a strong background in research and development, Hannah specialises in exploring sustainable materials and technologies to drive forward Kingspan's mission of reducing carbon emissions and promoting energy efficiency. Her expertise is particularly focused on the integration of natural materials, such as hemp, into modern construction solutions, aligning with Kingspan's recent acquisition of Hempflax, a

pioneer in industrial hemp production. Hannah's work is at the forefront of developing eco-friendly building products that combine performance with environmental responsibility. She is passionate about advancing the use of hemp-based materials, which offer significant benefits in terms of sustainability, insulation, and carbon sequestration. As a panellist at the upcoming Industrial Hemp Conference, Hannah will share insights into Kingspan's innovative approaches and the potential of hemp in transforming the construction industry.

[Find out more about Kingspan's sustainability initiatives and products here](#)

### **Patrick Daly (TU Dublin)**

Patrick is a distinguished academic, consultant, and researcher specialising in sustainability within the built environment. Based at TU Dublin, Patrick brings extensive expertise in sustainable construction practices, circular economy principles, and innovative materials. With a strong focus on reducing the environmental impact of the construction sector, his work bridges the gap between academic research and practical industry solutions. Patrick's numerous research projects explore the potential of alternative, low-carbon materials, making him a key voice in the conversation around industrial hemp as a sustainable building resource. His insights into the integration of hemp-based materials into modern construction practices have positioned him as a thought leader in the field. As a sought-after consultant, Patrick collaborates with industry stakeholders to drive the adoption of sustainable practices, ensuring that environmental considerations are at the forefront of construction innovation. His contributions to academia and industry have been widely recognised, making him an influential figure in advancing sustainability in the built environment. At the upcoming Industrial Hemp Conference, Patrick will share his expertise on the role of hemp in creating a more sustainable future for construction, offering valuable insights for industry professionals and researchers alike.

### **Ronan McDermott (Director of Hemp Build)**

Hemp Build is at the forefront of sustainable construction using industrial hemp. With over a decade of expertise in heritage specialist renovations, Ronan has developed a deep understanding of traditional building techniques and modern sustainable practices. At Hemp Build, he focuses on the innovative use of hemp-based materials, including hemp blocks, to create eco-friendly, energy-efficient buildings. Ronan will share his insights on the technical specifications of hemp blocks, their airtightness, and insulation properties, as well as the correct methods of plastering and lime rendering for optimal conservation. He will also discuss the fire-retardant qualities of hemp, making it a safe and durable choice for modern construction. A passionate advocate for sustainable building, Ronan combines his heritage restoration background with cutting-edge hemp technology to push the boundaries of eco-conscious construction.

### **Steve Allin (Hemp Consultant and Hemp Building Expert)**

Steve Allin is a pioneering advocate and expert in the field of hemp construction, renowned for his extensive knowledge and practical experience in building with hemp-based materials. Based in Kerry, Ireland, Steve has been at the forefront of the sustainable building movement for over two decades, promoting the use of hemp as a versatile, eco-friendly alternative to traditional construction materials. He is the author of several influential books, including *Building with Hemp* and *Hemp Buildings: 50 International Case Studies*, which have become essential resources for architects, builders, and policymakers worldwide. Through his writing and advocacy, Steve has played a crucial

role in raising awareness about the environmental and economic benefits of hemp in construction. Steve also holds a prominent position within the European Industrial Hemp Association (EIHA), where he contributes to shaping policies and advancing research in the hemp industry. His work has been instrumental in driving the adoption of hemp-based solutions across Europe and beyond. A passionate educator, Steve regularly speaks at international conferences and workshops, sharing his expertise and inspiring a new generation of sustainable builders.

[Find out more about the International Hemp Building Association \(IHBA\) here](#)

#### **Larry McGarry (CEO, Carbon Balance Network)**

Larry McGarry is the CEO of Carbon Balance Network, a pioneering organisation dedicated to advancing sustainable carbon management solutions. With a depth of experience in communications, environmental sustainability and renewable resources, Larry has been instrumental in developing innovative strategies for carbon sequestration and climate-positive practices. Together with founding partner, Dr Deborah Brown (PHD) Carbon Balance Network has emerged as a key player in promoting industrial hemp as a sustainable crop for carbon offsetting, decarbonising construction and advanced manufacturing. Larry is a passionate advocate for integrating hemp into circular economies and has been a vocal proponent of its role in combating climate change. His expertise spans policy development, carbon accounting, and sustainable supply chain management. Larry holds an BA Hons degree in Design for Industry and is a frequent speaker at international forums on sustainability and carbon neutrality.

### **Panel discussion Two: Bioplastics to Bioeconomy - Hemp's Role in Sustainable Transformation**

#### **Peter Quigley (CEO, Athena Blue)**

Peter Quigley is the CEO of Athena Blue, a company with a vision to re-establish local hemp and flax processing and supply chains, specifically targeting the applications in advanced manufacturing. With a background in advanced composites in aerospace and automotive, and a passion for environmental innovation, Peter has been at the forefront of efforts to transform industrial hemp into high-performance, environmentally responsible products. Embracing collaboration with the local supply chain, Athena Blue has developed novel technologies that leverage hemp's versatility to replace traditional synthetic materials and reduce environmental impact. Peter is a strong advocate for the circular economy and has been instrumental in forging partnerships across industries to promote hemp-based solutions. His vision is to make hemp a cornerstone of sustainable manufacturing, and he continues to drive research and commercialisation efforts in this space. Peter holds a Master Degree in Aeronautical Engineering from Queen's University Belfast and post graduate studies in Ulster University in Advanced Composites and Polymers.

[Find out more about Athena Blue here](#)

#### **Dr. Josephine Mclvor (Ulster University)**

Dr. Mary Josephine Mclvor is a Research Associate at Ulster University's Composites Research Group, specialising in bioengineering. With a background in biotechnology and microbiology, Dr. Mclvor's

expertise spans from evaluating the biocompatibility of novel biomaterials to developing advanced composite materials for industrial applications. Her work in the Nanotechnology and Integrated Bioengineering Centre (NIBEC) and Composites Research Group has equipped her with skills in advanced material characterisation (physico-chemical, mechanical and biological) and method development techniques, crucial to the optimisation of new materials such as, the use of natural fibres like hemp in biocomposites, to ensure they meet their end-use performance specification.

Dr. McIvor's recent deep-dive analysis of the composites market, primarily focusing on the need for a secure natural fibre supply chain on the Island of Ireland, along with her collaboration with the marine industry to develop antifouling strategies for composite structures, demonstrate her ability to bridge academic research with practical industrial applications.

Her experience in bioengineering and setting up new research capabilities positions her at the forefront of innovation in advanced composite materials making her a valuable contributor to the evolving field of hemp-based biocomposites, addressing key challenges in sustainability, performance enhancement and application diversification.

[Find out more about Ulster University here](#)

### **Carmen Dominguez (BBioNets)**

Carmen Giron Dominguez is a researcher, project coordinator, and advocate for the bioeconomy, with extensive experience in bio-based technologies and sustainable innovation. She currently leads the Horizon Europe-funded BBioNets project, which fosters a Bio-based Technologies Thematic Network across six European countries to advance the management and processing of agricultural and forest biomass using bio-based solutions. Carmen's work builds on the efforts of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups to promote circular economy practices and sustainable biomass utilisation.

Previously, Carmen contributed to the INFORMBIO project in Ireland, assessing sustainable biological feedstock for the bioeconomy, and worked with the CIRCBIO research group on European bioeconomy R&D projects such as URBIOFUTURE and BIO4AFRICA. She also has experience as an innovation consultant for bio-based businesses in Spain. Carmen holds a degree in Biology, specialising in Ecology and Botany, and an MSc in Environmental Biotechnology, focusing on circular economy applications in agriculture. Her vision is to drive sustainable innovation and make bio-based technologies a cornerstone of the global bioeconomy.

[Find out more about the Circular Bioeconomy Research Group \(CircBio\) here](#)

## **Panel Discussion Three - Innovating with Hemp - Exploring Alternative Uses and Shaping the Policy Landscape**

### **Robert Johnson (Chair, Hemp Cooperative Ireland and Arigna Fuels)**

Robert Johnson is the Chair of the Hemp Cooperative Ireland, a leading organisation dedicated to advancing the industrial hemp sector in Ireland. With a background in sustainable energy, Robert also serves as the Research & Development Manager at Arigna Fuels, where he focuses on innovative bioenergy solutions. His expertise lies in bridging the gap between agricultural practices and renewable energy, making him a key figure in the development of hemp-based biofuels and other sustainable applications. Robert is passionate about fostering collaboration within the hemp industry

to drive policy changes and promote the economic potential of hemp in Ireland.

[Find out more about Hemp Cooperative Ireland here](#) and [find out more about Arigna Fuels here](#)

### **Ian Marshall (Queen's University Belfast)**

Ian Marshall is Head of Business Development and Policy at the Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy (CASE) in Queen's University Belfast (QUB). He spent five years in the Institute for Global Food Security (IGFS) in QUB working on agricultural innovation and sustainable crop production. With a career that spans both academia and public service, Ian brings a wealth of experience to the hemp industry. He is a former Senator in the Dáil Éireann, where he played a key role in shaping agricultural policy and advocating for rural development. Prior to his political career, Ian served as the President of the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU), where he championed the interests of farmers and led initiatives to improve agricultural practices and sustainability. His research at Queen's University explores the agronomic potential of industrial hemp as a versatile crop for food, fibre, and bio-based materials. Ian is a strong advocate for evidence-based policy development to support the expansion of hemp cultivation and its diverse applications.

[Find out more about Queen's University Belfast here](#)

### **Diarmaid Mulcahy (Business Advisor)**

Diarmaid Mulcahy is a seasoned business advisor with over three decades of experience in strategic development, market expansion, and policy formation. With a strong focus on agriculture and renewable natural resources, Diarmaid has worked across a broad range of industries, providing expertise in business expansion, modelling, financial planning, and market analysis. His deep understanding of a number of sectors, including hemp enables him to guide businesses in navigating market complexities and achieving sustainable growth. Diarmaid is particularly passionate about policy and its crucial role in shaping the future of the bioeconomy. He has actively engaged in policy development to support the growth of a number of industries including hemp, and advocates for frameworks that drive innovation, sustainability, and economic opportunity. Through his work, Diarmaid is committed to bridging the gap between business strategy and policy, empowering hemp-based businesses to thrive within an evolving regulatory landscape.

### **Daniel Lyons (CEO, Wild Atlantic Hemp)**

Daniel Lyons is the CEO and co-founder of Wild Atlantic Hemp, a pioneering company in the Irish hemp industry. Together with his wife, Laura Jane Foley, Daniel has been growing hemp since 2018 and specialises in producing high-quality, sustainable hemp-based products. Their farm, located on the Loop Head Peninsula in County Clare, is a seed-to-shelf operation, recognised for its commitment to regenerative farming practices.

Daniel has been a key member of the Hemp4Soil EIP Project operational group, a collaboration with seven local farmers to study hemp's role in improving soil health. Through this project, he has tested hemp's ability to regenerate and aerate soil, enhance biodiversity, and reduce reliance on synthetic fertilisers. Drawing on his expertise, Daniel has experimented with a variety of natural farming methods to optimise hemp's environmental benefits. A passionate advocate for the industry, Daniel is dedicated to promoting hemp as a crop with economic and ecological potential, helping to shape

the future of sustainable farming in Ireland.

[Find out more about Wild Atlantic Hemp here](#)

**Ed Horgan (COO, Business Consultant)**

Ed Horgan is a seasoned business consultant and Chief Operating Officer with a wealth of experience in driving operational efficiency and strategic growth across both corporate and start-up environments. Known for his ability to scale businesses and optimise operations, Ed has a proven track record of guiding high-level investments, managing property portfolios, and leading IT businesses to success. In the hemp industry, Ed is a key player, helping companies develop sustainable business models and navigate complex regulatory landscapes. His expertise lies in identifying opportunities for maximum gain while balancing the often-conflicting needs of stakeholders. Passionate about the economic and environmental potential of industrial hemp, Ed is committed to promoting innovation and creating new opportunities within this rapidly evolving sector. With unwavering support from colleagues, clients, and stakeholders, Ed is recognised as a problem solver and needs provider, having orchestrated numerous successful business initiatives.