



IRISH RURAL LINK PRESENTATION ON RENEWABLE ENERGY & RURAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Sub-Committee on Job Creation through Use of
Renewable Energy Resources**
Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment

20th May 2009



Irish Rural Link

**Irish Rural Link's vision is of vibrant, inclusive
and sustainable rural communities that
contribute to an equitable and just society**

- A national organisation campaigning for sustainable rural communities
- Founded in 1991
- Representing Community based organisations whose aim is to promote rural sustainability - social, environmental and economic
- Represents rural communities in National Social Partnership



Irish Rural Link & Renewable Energy

- Needs to be linked to promoting rural development
- IRL wish to ensure regions and rural areas with low population densities and less industrial development are given due consideration in the development of policies
- Potential to provide employment opportunities in rural areas experiencing agricultural decline
- Employment and income in lagging and rural regions provide greatest national benefits



Rural Employment

- Narrow economic base of rural areas
- Rapid rise in unemployment that is occurring across all sectors will be most difficult to resolve in rural areas, over-reliance on primary industries such as agriculture, construction and low-level manufacturing which are in decline
- Rise in part time farming - typically employed in vulnerable sectors
- Farmers relying solely on farm income have a higher probability of poverty and deprivation - Teagasc
- Difference between the 'poorest' and 'richest' counties increased over Celtic Tiger period – ESRI, CSO
- Requires shift away from primary production to higher value sectors and activities
- Rural communities' strong track record of innovative thinking and adapting to changing circumstances, e.g. group water scheme

Current Government Policy

- The Energy White Paper *Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland (2007)* contains commitments to renewable energy targets, including 33 per cent of electricity generation from renewable sources by 2020, 12 per cent of heat generated from renewable sources by 2020, and a biofuels penetration target of at least 10 per cent by 2020 in the transport sector.
- *Building a Smart Economy (2008)* outlines a 'new green deal' to move us away from fossil fuel-based energy production through investment in renewable energy and to promote the green enterprise sector and the creation of 'green-collar' jobs
- *Rural Development Programme Ireland 2007-2013 - Renewable energy production can create economically and environmentally sustainable enterprises and play an important role in the provision of employment. The development of a policy and overall strategic framework for this sector will be prioritised in the coming years.*

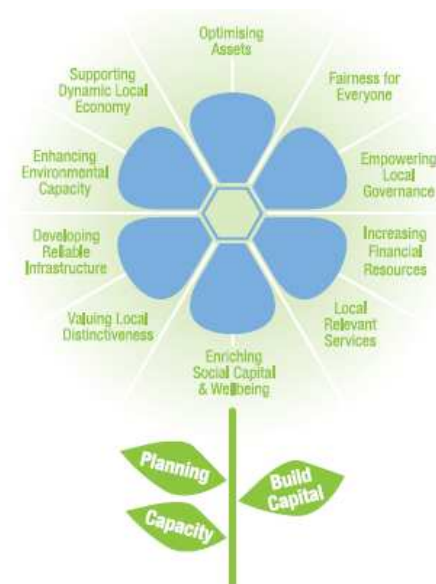
Renewables Opportunities

- Internationally accepted that renewable energy has the potential to create large numbers of jobs compared to other initiatives
- Initiatives take time to establish, and if Ireland is to achieve ambitious goals, aggressive programmes must be started immediately

Renewables Opportunities

- o Employment
 - Direct in the sector (manufacturing, installation, maintenance, education)
 - Indirect employment in the supply industry
 - Export potential
 - e.g. Western Development Commission - using wood to produce heat energy could be worth an additional €15 million per annum and create up to 900 additional jobs in rural areas in the region
 - IFA - up to 5000 jobs can be created in biomass
 - Marine Institute - 1,900 jobs could be created by 2020 in marine energy technology
 - Over 20,000 employed in wind sector in Denmark
 - ECOTEC report (1999) opportunities for 11,000 jobs in renewables by 2020
- o Regional income benefit
- o Contribution to regional knowledge capacity
- o Environmental dividend, fuel security
- o Development of local, high quality, energy infrastructure

- o Proposals informed by Carnegie Commission for Rural Community Development's Petal Model of Rural Development which outlines elements required for resilient rural communities



From Policy to Practice

- Local Energy Audits
- Case Studies
 - R & D, Manufacturing
- Cooperatives
- Policy Recommendations

Local Energy Audits: Co. Westmeath

Renewable energy in Co. Westmeath

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Supported by Westmeath Community Development under the LEADER + Programme 2000 – 2006 and also Westmeath County Council



Available to download from Westmeath Community Developer's website www.westcd.ie

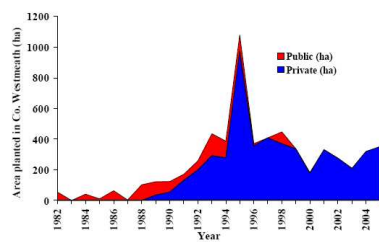


Figure 7 Annual levels of afforestation in Co. Westmeath 1982 – 2005

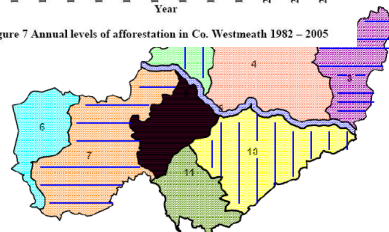


Figure 3. Landscape character assessment areas of Co. Westmeath



Local Energy Audits: Co. Westmeath

- Assessed the renewable energy potential available specifically in Co. Westmeath, with a focus on agricultural and rural development
- Renewable energies investigated included: the growing of bioenergy crops such as oilseed rape, miscanthus and willow; the production potential of wind energy and hydro-power in addition to Co. Westmeath's wood energy resources
- Identified possible market outlets
- Examined renewable energy activities underway in Co. Westmeath such as the production of biodiesel, anaerobic digestion and others
- Each area's Audit would identify own unique mix of opportunities and resources in area



Case Study: R & D

Zengia Innovation & Renewable Energy

- Based in Dunhill, Co. Waterford
- Designing innovative turbine propellers
- Difficulties accessing finance
- Importance of professional networks, enterprise support



Case Study: Manufacturing

C & F Group

- 250 new jobs in design, engineering, manufacturing and management, sales and after-sales, and will be generated over the next two years in Athenry
- Have developed new technology harnessing wind at lower speeds than ever before
- 70% of turbines to be exported, mainly to Europe
- Combining innovation with existing knowledge of industrial equipment and tools



Energy Co-ops

- Energy co-operatives aim to promote and facilitate locally the development and use of renewable energy for the benefit of the co-operative members. The main purpose of the co-operative is:
 - Developing locally available renewable energy resources by and for the co-operative members
 - Reducing the expenditure on energy (electricity and heating) sourced from outside the county/area and maintain the expenditure within the local community
- 75% of wind turbines in Denmark owned by local co-operatives, can also be used for anaerobic digesters etc.



Energy Co-ops

Benefits:

- A direct stake in a local project
- Attractive financial return to members
- Delivery of local energy conservation projects
- Individual commitment to low carbon initiatives
- Create a nationwide network of green co-operatives
- Community funds share the ownership in renewable energy schemes and so promote the development and use of renewable energy
- Community funds could be the basis of stimulating greater positive interest in all uses of renewable energy
- Co-op to use local contractors for site development, maintenance, and support
- Possible role for Credit Unions
- Retains money in the local economy



Policy Recommendations

- Promotion of county and local energy audits, coordinated by a revised national network of energy agencies
- Planning & its impact on job creation
 - Review of current planning legislation to address bias against enterprise in rural locations



Recommendations: Funding

- Co-operatives facilitating local investment
 - Support for flagship projects
- Business Expansion Scheme
- Smart use of EU funds & taxation policy
- Investigate development of Community / Public / Private Partnerships with:
 - Public sector as Partner/Driver rather than Administrator/Auditor. From Policeman to Stakeholder, provides Enterprise Facilitators
 - Private sector offering professional expertise, funding and necessary goodwill
 - Community sector offering local knowledge, networks, leadership



Recommendations: Training & Education

- Education & Accreditation
 - Need for comprehensive training programme on how best to bring local energy project from concept to delivery
 - Universal, accredited standard in Renewable Energy required



Recommendations: Joined Up thinking

- National coordination of renewables - need for joined up thinking
 - e.g. Teagasc carrying out research, SEI promoting and administering grants, Department setting policy
 - Role of Energy Agencies
- Develop mentoring capabilities of enterprise agencies
- One stop shop advisory service required

Thank You

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