

SOUTH EAST SET FOR ENERGY TRANSITION STRATEGY

The 3 Counties Energy Agency (3cea) has rolled out a ten-year Energy Transition Strategy (2020-2030) in a bid to produce surplus green energy by 2030, making the counties of Kilkenny, Carlow and Wexford more sustainable, cleaner and national leaders in delivering low carbon homes, jobs and enterprise.

If Ireland is to meet its 2030 climate targets, a ten-fold increase in investment in energy efficiency and a commitment to grant-aid all eligible projects is required this year, according to sustainable energy experts.

The wholly-independent 3 Counties Energy Agency (3cea) has already helped over 40 sustainable energy communities – incorporating local authorities, homeowners, businesses, farms and voluntary sector across Kilkenny, Carlow and Wexford and further afield – to slash over €15m off their energy bills. Over the past seven years, the agency has also helped create over 300 jobs annually, supporting rural economic recovery.

Launching its strategy earlier this year in Castlecomer Discovery Park (a former fossil fuel industry hub in Kilkenny), in partnership with the three local authorities in its catchment area, the agency says it will help groups of homeowners, businesses, public sector, farmers and more to become a shining Irish and global example as a leader in the sustainable, efficient use of locally produced clean energy by 2030.

CARBON NEUTRALITY CHALLENGE

Speaking at the launch event, climate expert and Climate Council Advisory Council Chairman, John FitzGerald, said: “Transforming Irish society to become carbon neutral is a massive challenge. It has to be profitable for companies and households to invest in change but they also need help advice and encouragement.

“Without this assistance, change will happen very slowly. The role of local actors such as 3cea, is to provide advice and encouragement to households who do not have the expertise to know the right answer.”

Paddy Phelan, 3cea’s CEO, said: “A ten-fold increase in investment in energy efficiency is urgently needed to meet the targets by 2030 – starting with a commitment now to grant-aid all eligible projects in 2020. The SEAI Better Energy Community 2020 programme was again already well-oversubscribed, well ahead of the deadline.

“By 2030 we will be a region that has helped its energy



Prof John Fitzgerald, Chairman of the National Advisory Council on Climate Change, pictured with Paddy Phelan, 3cea CEO, and Sean McKeown, Director of Services, Kilkenny County Council, at the launch of the strategy.

consumers to act responsibly and one that produces surplus clean energy. For the first time in our history (spanning almost 20 years) as leaders in the energy and policy space we now have a roadmap to 2030 and real clarity around our plans.”

ENERGY-SAVING MEASURES

One example of energy-saving measures offered by 3cea included the agency’s work with Wexford County Council. The agency recommended replacing an outdated boiler and investing in heat pumps and skylights at the council’s machinery yard, resulting in savings of €18,300 a year.

It also worked with the Wexford local authority to introduce a controlled lighting system in its civic offices, works which are saving it a further €14,500 a year.

And it has also carried out an assessment of the heating demands on Kilkenny College. It recommended installing three high-efficiency condensing boilers, a new water heater and new buffer tank and heating control system. It helped the college draw down over €170,000 in grant aid, and it is now saving almost €10,000 each year on its bills.

Phelan said that his agency is ideally placed to be the independent trusted intermediary under the government’s Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) scheme through community benefit funds. “Across the three counties, an estimated annual €4,268,703 could be generated to complete a major energy transition,” he noted.