

WICKLOW'S FIRST DECARBONISATION ZONE ARRIVES IN ARKLOW

Arklow has been selected as the Garden County's pilot decarbonisation zone, and Wicklow County Council will now work with all community sectors in the town to test and measure the process of decarbonising the economy and society before the end of the year.



The aim of the pilot project is to create a baseline on how decarbonisation will be rolled out across Wicklow to ensure a just transition for all. Arklow will now play a pivotal role in helping Wicklow County Council to develop its response to climate change.

As Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council and a member of Arklow Municipal District, Cllr Pat Kennedy said he was delighted that Arklow had been chosen as Wicklow's first decarbonisation zone. The process will allow the town to focus on positive regeneration of the town and to future-fit it for the coming decades.

"We now have clarity on the path ahead towards tackling the climate change issue and it sets out unambiguously the choices for our community over the next decade. We're grateful to have the active support of the Arklow Town Team, Arklow Tidy Towns and a very active community network.

"Wicklow County Council will continue its engagement with the public on how to meet the government's target of 50% reduction in CO₂ for Arklow and the rest of the county," he stated.

WIDE BASE FOR INNOVATION

Wicklow's Chief Executive Frank Curran said that in selecting a zone Wicklow County Council wanted to pick a location that provided a wide base for innovation and demonstration projects, a town that would facilitate ambition in exploring the opportunities and challenges of decarbonisation.

He said each local authority in the country must select a decarbonisation zone, which can be either urban or rural but must cover either a population of 5,000 or a land area of five square kilometres. In the chosen zone Wicklow County Council will be required to identify projects for decarbonisation, work with the community on an implementation plan to be finalised



SSE Renewables' wind farm (Beatrice Offshore Windfarm Ltd, off Scotland's north east coast) is of a similar size to the planned offshore wind farm in Arklow, which is located at the heart of significant generation of renewable energy and is well-placed to lead on renewables.



"The council will continue to engage with the public on meeting the government's target of 50% reduction in CO₂ for Arklow" – Cllr Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council

by the end of 2021, establish baseline carbon emission and measure progress on decarbonisation.

Curran added that the town will have a target of reducing emissions by 7% per annum and achieving a 51% reduction by the end of the decade. Lessons learned from this project will be applied countywide with the goal of achieving 'net zero' carbon emissions for the whole county by 2050.

Cllr Rory O'Connor, Chair of Wicklow's Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Strategic Policy Committee, described the pilot project as "a massive step forward" to making Wicklow carbon neutral.

"As the Garden County of Ireland, we have a responsibility as a council to ensure that this name makes sense for generations to come, and that we play our part to keep Wicklow green. The plan to turn Arklow into a decarbonisation zone will not only be the gold standard to implement across Wicklow but also across the country," he noted.

FOCUS ON ENERGY CONSUMPTION

Decarbonisation will require a focus on energy consumption. Studies of housing stock in Arklow demonstrated that there are significant areas and estates where retrofitting of both local authority and private housing stock is needed.

Arklow has a large and diverse industrial and enterprise activity and it is

hoped there will be good opportunities to work with this sector. Wicklow County Council will explore opportunities to work with high energy users. As the home of the first offshore wind farm, Arklow is located at the heart of a significant generation of renewable energy and is regarded as being well-placed to lead on renewables.

Like so many towns in Wicklow, Arklow suffers from traffic congestion and has high levels of long distance commuters. As part of the decarbonisation process Wicklow County Council will explore with the community the ways to reduce unnecessary car journeys by making active travel easier, looking at



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better commuting and remote working methods.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Citizen engagement will be pivotal to the success in rolling out decarbonisation, while the Arklow Town Team, Tidy Towns, the local Chamber and the Municipal District will be key partners for the development of the project.

Arklow's vibrant community sector coupled with the proactive engagement of the local business community have been recognised as a positive aspect by Wicklow County Council, which will help to embed the programme and deliver project actions. As a pilot decarbonisation zone the whole community will have an input into shaping the future of Arklow, contributing to a stronger future for the town.

In addition to Arklow, the county also has a large and growing sustainable energy community network in other towns such as Blessington, Glenmalure, Laragh, Wicklow, Greystones/Delgany, Newtownmountkennedy, Kilcoole and Enniskerry. These communities are also on the journey towards decarbonisation and Wicklow County Council will work with them in rolling out the lessons learned from in Arklow and elsewhere across the county.