

SOUTH EAST AGENCY ON ENERGY MISSION FOR RURAL REGIONS

Ireland's enduring dependency on imported fossil fuel is "a root cause of high energy costs", harming our economy, the security of our energy supply and our planet, one of the country's top climate experts warned at the launch of the new South East Energy Agency for Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford and now Waterford.

Marie Donnelly, Chairperson of the Climate Change Advisory Council, claims that Ireland has the potential to generate much of its energy needs through indigenous resources and an immediate opportunity to significantly reduce spiralling energy costs but that leadership will be required to deliver results.

"One million euro an hour is leaving this country to purchase imported fossil fuel. Ireland's dependence on fossil fuels is a root cause of high energy costs, supply instability as well as high levels of carbon dioxide emissions.

"We must quickly unlock Ireland's vast renewable energy resources, increasing our targets for onshore wind, solar renewable electricity and c projects as well as the pace of delivery through improvements to planning, regulatory and connections processes.

"By expediting the delivery of these crucially important indigenous resources we will secure our long-term energy future, protect households and businesses against cost volatility and support our climate change objectives.

"This will need strong political and policy support at both a national and local level as well as support to local sustainable energy communities," Donnelly said as she launched the new South East Energy Agency, in Waterford.

NEAR ZERO EMISSIONS RURAL REGION
Experienced in the energy sector at many levels, the team working with the South East Energy Agency has a trusted 20-year track record of delivering low carbon energy solutions across the south east of Ireland.



Pictured at the official launch (l-r): John Carley, Chair, South East Energy Agency; Michael Walsh, Chief Executive of Waterford City & County Council; Marie Donnelly, Chair, Climate Change Advisory Council, and Paddy Phelan, CEO, South East Energy Agency.

The team is now bidding to create the country's first near zero emissions rural region that spans Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford and now Waterford. Its mission is to help the four counties become a further magnet for low carbon, energy efficient and sustainable enterprise.

It all builds on the trojan work completed over two decades by the 3 Counties Energy Agency (3CEA) and its predecessor, the Carlow-Kilkenny Energy Agency. Over that time, the not-for-profit energy agency has been leading the regional and national fight against climate change.

Its activities since its foundation have resulted in a CO² reduction of 71,225 tonnes, saving 328Gwh of total primary

energy and an avoided spend of €24 million on energy for its partners, much of which is produced using fossil fuels and over this decade needs to transition to clean energy sources.

"The expansion into Waterford and a drive to create a sustainable energy rural zone further demonstrates the newly formed South East Energy Agency's mission to create a low carbon, energy efficient region, work in partnership with the transport industry, home owners, local authorities business and farming sector to raise awareness and provide support to those who want to become more energy efficient," explained Paddy Phelan, CEO of the South East Energy Agency.

SOUTH EAST ENERGY AGENCY

SOLVING A COMPLEX COMBINATION

With recent energy security and price shocks impacting all homes, business and communities, we all need to play our part, Phelan noted. “The analogy I use is that we all find ourselves all meeting at the same narrow gate to find the gate locked. The combination to that gate is complex. Everyone is looking around to see who has the combination code. Government has one number; supply chain has another, and finance has another. Infrastructure has the final two numbers.

“The South East Energy Agency is here to help to solve the complex combination, open the gate, widen the gate and ensure safe passage through that gate for every citizen in the region. Without that code made available to everyone, we cannot transition smoothly.

“We are supporting energy users in the southeast towards a zero-carbon future. Ireland didn’t deliver on our 2020 targets. We can’t wait until the oil runs out to make a switch. Our 2030 targets are much stiffer. We have to start accepting responsibility as individuals and understand there is a way, we will get there, but we all need to play our part in our homes, in our communities and in our own back yards.”

The CEO said that the agency’s team and its members are not just delivering through communities in terms of energy efficiency. He pointed out that they are also looking ahead, starting to plan for what the next number of decades will need to look like, particularly when it comes to the transition of both energy infrastructure and energy supply at a regional level.

“Through our work we want to partner and facilitate the key stakeholders to ensure that the regional is transitioned



Padraig O’Gorman, Director of Services, Carlow County Council; Michael Walsh, Chief Executive, Waterford County Council; Michael Kelly, CEO of GIY; Mary Mulholland, Director of Services, Kilkenny County Council; Paddy Phelan, CEO, South East Energy Agency; John Carley, Chairman, South East Energy Agency; Tom Enright, Chief Executive, Wexford County Council, and Ciaran Byrne, SEAI, Director of National Retrofit.

and ready to support the now increasing appetite of its citizens to take action,” Phelan said.

The agency is working at local, regional, nation and EU level to ensure that the policies that are not working are fixed and the infrastructure that will be required is considered and delivered on time. Through

strategic partnerships it aims to enable communities in this region to make that transition, not just in energy use or source, but also in terms of their planning for the low carbon region of the near future.

For further information and updates visit www.southeastenergy.ie



John Paul Phelan, Carlow-Kilkenny TD (former Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government from June 2017 to June 2020) pictured with Paddy Phelan, CEO of South East Energy Agency and Alexandra Hamilton, Senior Engineer.