

COMMUNITY ENERGY UPGRADES GRANTED €20M

A series of community energy upgrades will be funded to the tune of €20m this year, while Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) programmes will also ring-fence funding to deliver group retrofits to scale up climate action in communities throughout the country.

Minister for Communications, Climate Action & Environment, Richard Bruton TD, has said that to achieve the goals set in the Climate Action Plan, ring-fenced monies from SEAI programmes need to scale up the climate transition in communities.

As part of the first incentive under the new approach, €4m of the 2020 funding for the SEAI community grant scheme will be used to specifically target housing retrofit projects, which will deliver retrofits grouping home upgrades together, Minister Bruton noted, when making the funding announcement on 16 December 2019.

Since 2012, the SEAI community grant scheme has supported over 400 community energy efficiency projects, resulting in the upgrade of 18,200 homes, and over 2,500 community, public and private buildings. The €145m invested to date has leveraged an overall investment of €370m in communities across the country with annual energy savings estimated to be over €65m.

All successful applicants will have a strong partnership approach and will see communities working together to deliver the proposed project," he added.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Minister Bruton said: "Community partnerships are the focus of this scheme and are crucial to delivering on our objectives as set out in the Climate Action Plan.

"This builds on the work of over 320 energy communities in SEAI's community network who are working towards longer term sustainable



St Michael's House Leisure Centre in Coolock received a Government grant through SEAI for a community energy upgrade in 2018. Pictured (l-r): Paddy Sweeney, MD of RIEL, Richard Bruton TD, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Sarah Hewitt, Manager of St Michael's House Leisure Centre, and John Randles, Head of Department at SEAI.

energy plans for their local areas. The government is currently designing a new retrofitting model as part of the commitment to upgrade 500,000 homes to B2 by 2030."

The new model will:

- Group homes in the same area together to drive down cost.
- Start with social homes owned by the local authorities, but will embrace privately owned homes in the wider community.
- Introduce easy pay back models (e.g. through your utility bill).
- Develop smart finance (e.g. loan guarantee models, European investment bank).

SEAI will administer the grants and its CEO William Walsh said they're working with hundreds of energy communities across the country, providing them with the knowledge and the means to both plan their own low carbon pathway.

SOME PROJECTS SUPPORTED IN 2019

Waterford County Council is leading a project that will see a selection of Waterford libraries, schools, community centres, GAA clubs, shops and farms carry out insulation, heating, lighting and refrigeration upgrades.

Wicklow County Council is leading a project in both the counties of Wicklow and Wexford that will see a selection of homes, leisure centres, recycling centres, public buildings, a bakery and a hotel carry out upgrades on insulation, heating, lighting, refrigeration, heat recovery and steam generation.

Open to both large and small projects alike, the application process is non-competitive with qualifying applications approved on a first-come first-served basis.

For full details of the scheme and application details visit www.seai.ie