

**Submission by Bord na Móna Energy Ltd.**

**on**

**Irish Energy Research Council**

**“An Energy Research Strategy for Ireland”**

**30<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

Energy Research Strategy Submissions,  
Energy Planning Division,  
Dept. of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources,  
29-31, Adelaide Road,  
Dublin 2.

30<sup>th</sup> June 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

I refer to the strategy document “An Energy Research Strategy for Ireland” drawn up by the Irish Energy Research Council and released for public consultation and comment during May 2008. Bord na Mona Energy Ltd. fully endorses the decision to increase the amount of funding available for energy oriented research in Ireland, and welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Council’s research strategy.

Recognising that energy research in Ireland is starting from a comparatively low base, and that it takes time to build capability and expertise, Bord na Mona Energy Ltd. would support the overall thrust of the strategy: to focus on priority research areas; to use existing agencies; and to ensure that energy research budgets are clearly separated and identified in order to provide certainty for long term funding.

The proposed research strategy recognises the ambitious targets outlined in the Government’s White Paper “Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland”. It also needs to pay due regard to the challenges posed for Ireland by the “Energy Package” of proposed legislation issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> January by the European Commission, especially the demanding 2020 target for greenhouse gas emission reductions by the non-traded sectors.

The strategy also recognises that, to a large degree, Ireland will be a technology taker, and that ‘big ticket’ research areas, such as photovoltaics, fuel cells and carbon capture and storage require significant agency or industry funding. However, this should not preclude Irish researchers from collaborating and participating in multi-national research programmes in these areas.

While the strategy provides a broad framework, and doesn’t attempt to identify individual research projects, it does lean towards the academic/agency arena. This may be a reflection of the Energy Council’s structure, interests and expertise. We recognise that there are certain areas of pure or fundamental research, such as those outlined for Strategic Line 2, that business may find to be too high risk. However, we believe that the strategy proposed may miss the opportunity for better agency/industry collaboration, joint funding, commercialisation of the outputs and implementation of solutions to help solve Ireland’s energy and emissions problems.

Within Strategic Line 3 – RD&D in the five sector-specific fields – Bord na Mona Energy Ltd. believes that the scope should be expanded to include:

- **Grid/Infrastructure:** The existing targets for electricity generation from renewable energy sources, and the potential penetration indicated by the recent All-Island Grid Study, will require both development and reinforcement of the existing electricity network. One of the major problems facing both Eirgrid and ESB Networks is the consistent public resistance to the construction of new overhead lines. We recommend that research in this area should also encompass the requisite socio/psychological enquiries with a view to ascertaining if particular approaches can be followed that lead to a greater degree of public acceptance.
  
- **Sustainable Bioenergy:** With limited areas of our land base under forest or used for growing crops, Ireland has significant constraints on the amount of bioenergy feedstock that it can grow indigenously. One potential source is the recovery of such feedstock from waste streams, with energy production through gasification, anaerobic digestion or direct combustion. Such recovery would also help Ireland meet its obligations under 1999/31/EC to divert significant volumes of biodegradable waste from landfill by 2016. However, existing legislation governing the classification, management and utilisation of waste materials limits the ease with which this may be accomplished. We recommend that additional collaborative research should be conducted in this area with a view to maximising the recovery of sustainable bioenergy from waste streams.

The main bodies proposed for implementing the strategy, SEI, SFI and DCENR, have the necessary structures and skills to oversee the rollout of the research programme. However, in order to ensure that adequate input is obtained from the energy sector in general, and energy-related industry in particular, we would recommend that the proposed high level coordinating forum should have a much broader representation.

Bord na Mona Energy Ltd. welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the process at the forthcoming public consultation day, and looks forward to an engaging exploration of the strategy proposed by the Energy Research Council.

For and on behalf of  
Bord na Mona Energy Ltd.,

Charles Shier  
Strategic Development Manager