

EPA Response to the Irish Energy Research Council's *Energy Research Strategy For Ireland*

Introduction

The EPA welcomes the publication of Energy Research Strategy for Ireland, which has been prepared by the Irish Energy Research Council (IERC). Meeting Ireland's future energy needs, in an environmental and economically sustainable manner, is a fundamental challenge for Ireland. This energy challenge is shared at European and Global levels. It is widely recognised that significant and sustained investment in energy research is a key element of the response to this challenge. This strategy is therefore a timely contribution to inform research action in Ireland.

Comment on the Strategy

The strategy provides a strong basis for development of required research capacity. It covers a range of issues from basic to innovative research and outlines an approach to progress work in these areas. This would enable improved provision of information for decision making on future investment choices for energy supply. The strategy also highlights the need for inter-departmental cooperation and cross-sectoral approaches to underpin its implementation and in the fuller development and utilisation of its outputs.

The EPA welcomes the clear recognition of environmental issues in the strategy, as well as its inclusion in the vision for energy research. The document particularly highlights the challenges arising from the need to address energy and climate change issues by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to the atmosphere associated with current energy generation and use.

The ongoing need to coordinate key aspects of energy and environmental research is a key element of the strategy and current working links between the EPA research programme and energy research activities are highlighted.

The EPA wishes to confirm that it will continue to engage positively with *Sustainable Energy Ireland* (SEI) other agencies, departments and groups in support of coordination and implementation of research programmes that have intrinsic links, for example the work of the EPA's Climate Change Research Programme (CCRP) and related energy research. The strong element of cross agency coordination in the CCRP is identified as one of the existing research strengths in this document.

In support of this, the EPA wishes to highlight its ongoing cooperation with SEI in relation to research on environmental issues and particularly on energy modelling and analyses of related emissions. The further development of this work as outlined in Strategic Line 1 in the report is therefore welcome. This work and its outcomes will provide important input to projections of future GHG and other emissions to the atmosphere being carried out by the EPA.

The EPA also agrees with the other strategic lines identified in the document and

- welcomes the opportunity to enhance development of innovative research which will be enabled through the linkages with SFI in Strategic Line 2. This is an exciting and worthwhile development.
- agrees with the sector specific fields identified in Strategic Line 3, all of which have specific interests for Ireland
- recognises that mapping Ireland's energy resources will provide basic information on the potential for exploitation of this resource and that this is a fundamental requirement.

The EPA particularly wishes to comment on the establishment of Strategic Line 4-Watching Brief. As noted above while Ireland has unique features and challenges, similar energy related challenges exist at a European and at wider international levels. The development of a watching brief is therefore an important development as Ireland can learn from countries and avoid duplication of key research being carried out at international levels. To some extent this formalises ongoing activities, but nonetheless will provide the additional support required to enhance and optimise outputs from these activities.

This will have a natural focus on activities and developments in the International Energy Agency (IEA) and at a European level. However, it is also important to examine broader areas and regions. In particular this work could also consider the output from bodies under the UNFCCC who are examining key technologies and financing mechanisms for areas of sustainable energy. The future development of flexible mechanisms under the UNFCCC may also be interest. The EPA is also positioned to co-ordinate with and contribute to these areas. It is worthwhile to consider development of links to island nations such as New Zealand and to an extent Japan who also face similar challenges, and have advanced innovative thinking in these areas, from which Ireland can benefit.

The outputs from this activity should also be linked to related activities in environmental areas, such as under EPA's Climate Change Research Programme.

Conclusion

The *Energy Research Strategy For Ireland* is a welcome and important contribution to the development of energy research in Ireland in a manner that is responsive to broader issues of sustainability. In welcoming this document the EPA confirms that it wishes to ensure that relevant aspects of its own research programme are co-ordinated with work on energy research in order to optimise outputs for energy and environment.