

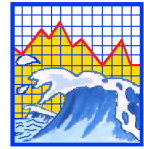


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Energy Research Strategy for Ireland

I would like to congratulate the Energy Research Council for producing this timely document on the future strategy for Irish energy research.

I welcome the overall coherence in the Strategy and the outline of the way forward for Ireland.

In the specifics :-

The identification of Ocean Energy as one of the specific strategic sectors for RD&D is welcomed and reflects Government policy as well as highlighting the opportunity for potential significant economic activity for Ireland. The ocean energy industry is in a development phase worldwide and the situation is that Ireland has the potential to make a significant contribution to this development as outlined in the Strategy Document. The funding already identified by the Minister for Energy, Eamon Ryan, in his announcements in January 2008, which bring into effect the contents of the Minister of Finance's speech on Budget Day, will be a good basis for the support necessary to ensure satisfactory economic development.

It is imperative that the research topics funded in the field of ocean energy are a mixture of fundamental research together with projects that are designed to support the "demonstration" aspects of the developing industry. Science Foundation Ireland must expand their definitions of researchers to take full account of the demands of Engineering Research if this industry is to develop.

One of the difficulties highlighted is the attraction and retention of good quality researchers into Ireland. The retention issue is particularly difficult especially where competing permanent positions are offered to researchers abroad and only temporary positions are available here. The introduction of the 7 year researcher posts in the Charles Parsons Energy awards goes some way to address this but are still limited. We recently lost a potential CP candidate as a result of this.

The Strategy document highlights the fragmented nature of energy research funding. There needs to be a costed approach and it would be hoped that this will be forthcoming as a result of this consultation. A clearly identified funding mechanism must be identified and the Government must make the appropriate budget available for it's implementation.

I look forward to participating in the Discussion Day in to be held July.

Dr. Tony Lewis