



Submission to Government on Green Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Future for Ireland'

Insurance & Contingency Planning for Possible Climate Crisis

Background

It is looking increasingly possible, perhaps probable, that due to a combination of:

- ✓ Further evidence of acceleration in the breakdown of polar glaciers,
- ✓ Future evidence that feedback factors are causing climate change itself to accelerate,

a scientific and political consensus will emerge within the next 5-10 years that we face a 'Climate Crisis'. It will be realised that we cannot afford to wait for safe and affordable fusion power or carbon sequestration technology¹ to come to our rescue. The risk of runaway global warming and 'melt-down' will be accepted as too serious for mild measures over a long period. In these circumstances a post-Kyoto agreement would include both radical targets and potentially crippling penalties for non-achievement.

Countries who had done their contingency planning and taken appropriate insurance actions would be much better placed than others to come through the following period with a minimum of political and social stress. In the case of Ireland, what might be these contingency plans and insurance actions?

¹ In the Green Paper carbon sequestration technology is only mentioned in the context of coal but of course it applies to all fossil fuels. *If* this technology was demonstrated to be both affordable and safe, in the sense of the CO₂ being permanently locked away from the atmosphere, then the problem of climate change would be solved and we would have several hundred years before coal ran out to develop alternatives such as fusion power or solar related power.

Possible Policies

In view of the above possibility the following policies for Ireland are suggested for consideration:

- Ø Preparing a contingency plan for achieving carbon neutrality (i.e. zero net CO2 Emissions) by, say, 2030.
- Ø Giving greater priority to all aspects of ‘Sustainability’, even at the expense of some security of supply risks such as switching from coal to LNG – see below – or phasing out peat burning.
- Ø Conversion of Moneypoint to LNG.
- Ø Going for international collaboration on R&D projects relating to wave power.
- Ø Priority for long lead time measures that could include:
 - § A major programme of education in secondary schools about climate change.
 - § Pilot plot trials to select the optimum species for short rotation energy crops.
 - § Immediate tax incentives for the purchase and running of fuel efficient vehicles.
 - § Feasibility studies for protective barrages for Dublin, Cork & Limerick.

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