

## Green Paper on Energy Suggestions & Submissions

Energy is the key issue facing our generation, and how we choose to deal with it will in all likelihood be the most important issue facing future generations. I commend the Government for tackling this important issue, but I think we should go further, strive for more progress, and be even more ambitious than we are at present. The bar needs to be set higher than 30% of energy to come from alternative sources by 2020. If we dream, let us dream that little bit bigger and push the boat out a little bit more. Recently, as I was driving and burning fuel, I listened to Marian Finucane's interview with Richard Branson on radio. He is investing €1.5 billion of his resources in the research and development of alternative fuel technologies. I laughed when I heard his proposal to tow aircraft from the terminal to the runway to save fuel and to have airplanes begin their descent into airports 15 minutes earlier. Similarly, we all would have laughed 20 years ago at proposals for tidal or wind energy. We all need to buy into the concept of 'Greener Living', and I believe the most effective way to change quickly is to offer incentives across the board of Government departments. Below are a few key points that I believe should be included in Energy planning as we look to the future.

### 1. Transport Incentives

The area of transport is the one where we could take steps quickly. As many will be aware, since 1990 there has been an increase of approximately 65% in car ownership. I gather from a recent press release of Sustainable Energy Ireland that transport is responsible for 41% of our primary energy demand and for 33% of our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. While one third of our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are in this area, in real terms we can take action through providing incentives for the likes of hybrid cars. I note that the car of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Deputy Roche, is a hybrid that operates with diesel and battery power. Four cars in the ministerial fleet are hybrids. They all could and perhaps should be as the fleet is renewed. I would ask that the following points be considered and included in the Energy paper.

- **Incentivisation for motorists:** Let us provide an incentive to the public, whether through a reduction or waiver of road tax or VRT on hybrid or energy efficient cars, and therefore make them an enticing and cost-effective purchase. Let us make it as attractive as possible for the public to purchase more environmentally efficient vehicles.
- **Incentivisation for manufacturers:** By encouraging vehicle manufacturers in Ireland, through tax breaks or incentive schemes, to produce a greater number and a wider variety of hybrid vehicles, thus having a greater number of environmentally friendly vehicles on the market.
- **Investment in biofuels:** If these were more readily available and if there were an incentive, possibly if it were cheaper than regular fuel and available at a majority of fuelling stations, perhaps we could get members of the public to change over quickly. Given that cars are responsible for one third of our emissions and 41% of primary fuel demand relates to

transport, substantial gains could be made if the focus was put on this issue.

## **2. Housing Incentives**

- **Extension of the Greener Homes Scheme:** Let us provide the scheme through tax credits or through cash payments by which we can attract public participation in renewable sources of energy within homes.
- **Cross-Departmental approach to building regulations:** Let us have cooperation and consensus amongst Government departments in formulating building regulations to ensure that all newly built or refurbishment projects include a variety of systems which reduce the dependency on fossil fuel consumption as a means of energy within our homes.

## **3. Extension of gas network to the NorthWest region**

- There is no gas provision in the region. Under the Gas Acts, Bord Gáis has no intention of bringing gas to this area due to their commercial mandate.
- However, north of a line between Dublin and Galway and west of Mullingar, there is no gas provision. Even if the Corrib gas pipeline comes to fruition, there will not be much provision for the people of Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal.
- The Minister of State kindly contacted me previously to outline the research being conducted on this issue and the appointment of consultants. Where is that at? I hope the full energies of the Department have been brought to bear on BGE to ensure it will expedite this issue as quickly as possible, to determine the subvention that will be required to extend the gas network to the north west and to build it as quickly as possible.

In sum, I welcome the Green Paper on Energy, and I commend the Government on taking the first step in tackling this most important issue. However, I urge the Government to be more ambitious in planning for the future, and to place an emphasis on incentivising greener living for all sectors of Irish life.