



# Comhar LEADER na hÉireann

## Renewable Energies Working Group

### Submission on All-ISLAND ENERGY MARKET Sustainability in Energy Supplies: A '2020 Vision' for Renewable Energy'

#### Introduction

*Comhar LEADER na hÉireann* (CLE) is the national network representing the 35 local action groups and three collective bodies administering the European Union's LEADER+ and the state's National Rural Development Programme in the Republic of Ireland. Many of the LEADER groups have a long-standing involvement in the promotion and development of renewable energies (RE) as a driver of rural development. Accordingly, CLE has recognised the importance of the RE sector and formed a 'working group' to examine the policy, strategic and operational issues pertinent to the sustainable growth of the sector.

CLE is currently concluding negotiations with Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) on a pilot partnership for the joint support and development of 'small-scale RE projects'. LEADER groups are active participants in a range of RE and energy conservation projects or forums throughout the state. CLE welcome this opportunity to respond to the *All-Island Energy Market – a 2020 Vision for Renewable Energy*, consultation paper, which was jointly published by the Irish Republic's Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources and the UK's Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment.

#### Submission Context

The LEADER groups that constitute the CLE working group are keen to ensure that the rural development potential of RE is utilised to the full. CLE is firmly of the view that the vision outlined in the '2020 Vision' consultation paper is highly compatible with its own goals. In general strategic terms, CLE welcomes the philosophy of the consultation paper, much of the detail and specifically the following proposals:

- The fundamental recognition in the document that there is an imperative for the island of Ireland to move away from its dependence on imported fossil fuels and to focus to a large part on local sources of energy, such as RE;
- the concentration on energy conservation in the approach to meeting the island's energy needs. The role of SEI and, particularly that of local energy agencies, is crucial to the promotion of renewable energies;
- the recognition of the potential role of rural areas in providing RE solutions and for rural communities to develop and to own the means of local energy production.

#### LEADER & RE – An Overview

As the *2020 vision* consultation paper outlines, rural Ireland offers many opportunities for the establishment and growth of RE. LEADER groups with their broad development focus and on-the-ground capacity believe that they can offer a major service in fulfilling this goal, which is beyond the capability of the existing RE promotion or energy supply companies. As mentioned in the document, CLE is very aware of the new situation that has arisen in the wake of the 'single farm payment' scheme.







**Energy Conservation** As mentioned above, CLE is currently in the process of rolling-out a pilot partnership in the establishment of small-scale RE projects. A number of energy agencies (EAs) are welcome partners in this process. Energy agencies as they are operated in many parts of the state offer the localised and independent expertise, not readily available elsewhere. Subject to the operation of the project, CLE sees a mainstreaming of this partnership approach as being desirable. However, inadequate funding and a need for national recognition of their important role in energy management and RE promotion hamper many of the existing EAs. CLE requests of the governments to:

- Establish a decentralised EA in all areas of the island of Ireland not already covered. By decentralised, CLE means an EA that looks beyond the immediate energy needs and interests of a sponsoring organisation (local authorities, etc.), to the needs of the wider community.
- Provide adequate multi-annual 'rolling' funding to the existing and to new EAs.
- Encourage close relationships based on partnership approaches to local energy projects between EAs, LEADER companies and national RE/ energy conservation bodies in the development of the RE sector. In the RE sector there is an obvious symbiotic relationship, which should be developed. As local partnerships themselves, LEADER companies in many cases would be prepared to mentor the establishment of EAs and provide EAs with support in their development period.

## Submission Response

In answer to the specific questions asked of those making submissions, please note the following.

- 1) The steps needs to arrive at a view of the appropriate level of renewable energy penetration on the island by 2020 include:
  - a) An audit on the relative availability of the several renewable resources.
  - b) A decision of the rate and scale of promotion and adoption of those favoured technologies; bearing in mind:
    - i) *The state of development of the RE technology;*
    - ii) *the contribution it could potentially make to the overall quality of life (economic, social, environmental) on the island;*
    - iii) *the need to ensure balanced regional development;*
    - iv) *targets per region or county.*
- 2) The "optimum future energy mix for Ireland" should be identified in terms of local resources, which will maximise the economic benefits to the two jurisdictions on the island.
- 3) The role of 'remote generators', 'embedded generators' and 'building integrated RE' should be decided on:
  - a) *The need to ensure a stable grid;*
  - b) *utilisation of the most promising RE sources;*
  - c) *the need to ensure rural regions are provided with a 'quality' of electricity coverage adequate to its future economic and social needs.*
  - d) *capability of the grid access model to accommodate small scale community generators.*
- 4) Development costs of the electricity grid should be apportioned with respect to the national strategic importance of ensuring balanced regional development. It should not be decided upon the gross costs of a new addition to the grid and the billing of same to the new applicant. To do this is to privilege those areas with already well-developed grids and traditional sources of energy, i.e. relatively urbanised areas.



There are existing international models of grid management where RE and other embedded generators are managed and buffered in a sustainable manner. While some of these models have inter-connectors to other grid capacity available to them – this is not the situation in all cases. Notwithstanding this, greater inter-connection of the North-South and East-West grids will assist in management of the island's grid.

- 5) The effects of enhanced North-South and East-West interconnection will be to allow greater stability to the island's grid and facilitate the addition of remote RE and other embedded generation.
- 6) An integrated regulatory environment would, in addition to providing for grid access flexibility across optimal RE solutions, be capable of building dynamic local partnerships for small scale, community owned energy generation projects. To deliver community RE generation levels comparable with other European countries, specific supports should include provision of capital aid and the development of economic models appropriate to small-scale community RE generators, promoted in partnership with local authority, local development and local energy agencies.

**Note:** CLE has no objection to the establishment of wind energy as a major power source on the grid, but proposes that "relatively small-scale generators" can and should also be accommodated. There is no need for a choice to be made, as suggested in point 14. Accommodating both alternatives offers an RE option to those without a viable wind resource (e.g. most inland areas) which in turn could provide the counterbalancing localised dispatchability that is needed to buffer wind on a power grid.

### Conclusion

CLE has clearly recognised the role that renewable energies and related technologies have to play in the island of Ireland's future energy development. The LEADER network is even more keenly aware of the potential of the sector in terms of rural development in the state. This submission highlights a number of challenges and opportunities, which need to be addressed or followed through if these prospects are to be realised. CLE generally welcomes the vision evident in the consultation paper and it is available to expand on any queries the consultation paper's authors may have on its submission.

Ends.

Queries with respect to this submission should be addressed to:

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