

PRESS RELEASE

Launch of First Tourism and Hospitality Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) Energy Master Plan

October 23rd 2024 | An Díseart, Green St, An Daingean, Dingle Peninsula

The Corca Dhuibhne Tourism and Hospitality Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) are proudly launching its Energy Master Plan (EMP) on October 23rd, 2024, at An Díseart, Green Street, An Daingean. Renowned travel journalist, Pól Ó Conghaile, will give a talk encouraging local businesses and the broader community to actively participate in the region's journey toward a more sustainable future.

Tourism: A Key Economic Driver for the Dingle Peninsula

Tourism plays a vital role in the Dingle Peninsula's economy. Recognising this, the SEC was established in March 2023 with the goal of fostering cleaner, more sustainable practices within the industry. As Ireland's first dedicated Tourism and Hospitality SEC, this initiative sets out to create a clear, sustainable roadmap for businesses in the sector and will provide the learnings and pathways for other areas to take action. The Energy Baseline for the tourism sector on the peninsula is a staggering 29,913 MWh—equivalent to €5.9 million per annum. The SEC aims to make this energy consumption more efficient, reducing it by 75% to 7,713 MWh. And a potential to reduce their carbon footprint by 85%.

'We know that sustainability is playing an ever-greater role in the choices tourists make as they research, book and undertake travel. But what's easy to forget is that thinking sustainably can make bottom line business sense too - through economic savings and creating a kind of tourism that is more beneficial to community life. Ireland can really lead on this, I think.' Pól Ó Conghaile, Travel Editor, Irish Independent.

'This project is an excellent example of collaboration between stakeholders, community groups and the tourism and hospitality industry. We would like to acknowledge all the wonderful help and support this project has received from the Dingle Hub, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Kerry County Council and the Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance in the key the aspects of Environmental monitoring, Community Engagement and Eco-friendly practices.' Daithi Gallagher, Wild Atlantic Way Manager at Fáilte Ireland

Key Findings from the Energy Master Plan (EMP)

The Energy Master Plan (EMP), developed through engagement with local businesses, revealed that many businesses were uncertain about how to read their energy bills or unaware of the potential benefits of working with an energy broker. For instance, one average-sized B&B saved €3,000 per annum by simply switching energy providers after a brief phone call with an energy broker.

The plan also highlights the significant potential of solar PV (photovoltaic) systems for tourism businesses, particularly those in towns that experience higher footfall during the summer months. A 13-bedroom guesthouse in Dingle installed an 8kWp solar PV system, which now meets 50% of its electricity needs and offers a payback period of just four years.

Energy Efficiency Opportunities

Energy audits and site visits conducted through the EMP revealed that many businesses, particularly in the hospitality sector, were using outdated kitchen and laundry appliances—often over 10 years old. Upgrading to more energy-efficient models will provide substantial energy savings.

Encouragingly, many of the EMP's recommendations involve low or no-cost solutions. Simple measures like staff training and behavioral changes can yield significant results without the need for large-scale investment.

Solar PV Success and Expansion

Since its inception, the SEC has been working to install 400 kW of solar PV capacity across 20 local businesses. Progressing as part of the launch event, the SEC is excited to announce the opening of a second round of its Solar PV Meitheal. Businesses interested in joining this initiative will have the opportunity to sign up during the event and ahead following the event.

Call to Action: Winter Workshops and Solar Group Buying Scheme

The SEC is calling on local businesses to take action by participating in a Solar PV Meitheal and attending a series of winter workshops. These workshops will focus on energy efficiency and food waste reduction, with specific sessions designed for hospitality kitchen and waiting staff to drive behavioral changes and improve sustainability practices. Information will be shared following the launch.

Empower: Corca Dhuibhne Irish pilot is front-runner in Europe

The Corca Dhuibhne Tourism and Hospitality SEC is playing a central role in the development of new digital and energy technologies that align with local needs and concerns. Businesses can register their interest on a digital platform to participate in initiatives like the Solar PV Meitheal. Ongoing campaigns will allow businesses to choose the best time for their involvement and they will be supported through the actions relevant to them. Importantly, participants will provide feedback on their experiences to help refine the platform, maximising its value and potential to drive meaningful change. This work forms part of a Horizon Europe project, Empower, where Dingle Peninsula is a front-running pilot due to the already significant active participation from tourism and agriculture businesses. *Deirdre de Bhailís, General Manager of Dingle Hub says "Over the next two years, this project will track energy actions on the peninsula to demonstrate, to Europe, the pathways for local businesses and communities to collaborate for a sustainable, self-sufficient future, thereby accelerating the clean energy transition."*

Project Leadership and Collaboration

The Dingle Hub is leading this project, in partnership with Fáilte Ireland, Kerry County Council, Údarás na Gaeltachta, and the Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance. It forms part of the ongoing effort to ensure a more environmentally and economically sustainable future for the Dingle Peninsula. This project is supported by the SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities programme.

For more information, please contact:

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Notes for the editor:

The [ENPOWER](#) (Energy Activated Citizens and Data-Driven Energy-Secure Communities for a Consumer-Centric Energy System) aims to design, develop, and demonstrate Social Sciences Humanitarian driven methodologies, interactive and closed-loop tools and services for energy-activated citizens and data-driven energy-secure communities towards a consumer-centric energy system. The project comprises 28 partners from 13 different countries. It is funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe program, under agreement no. 101096354.