

CORCA DHUIBHNE TOURISM
& HOSPITALITY

Sustainable Energy Community

OCTOBER 2025

LEARNING BRIEF



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This learning brief was co-created by the management group of the Corca Dhuibhne Tourism & Hospitality Sustainable Energy Community (T&H SEC). It covers the first phase of the project from January 2023 until September 2025.

The reflective learning and evaluation process was led by Clare Watson and involved: online interviews with each member of the management group (Deirdre de Bhailís, Dingle Hub; Declan Murphy, Fáilte Ireland; John Griffin (January 2024 only) and Helen O'Connor Barry, Kerry County Council; Maire Ní Mhainín, Údarás na Gaeltachta; Jonathan Sandham, DCSix Technologies; Ann Ní Chíobháin, project co-ordinator; and Martin Bealin, SEC leader) and representatives of six of the participating businesses (Áine Uí Dhubhshláine, Tig Áine; Daniel McCarthy, Dingle Linen Service; Jamie Ó Flannúra, Dingle Sea Safari; Lasse Mulcahy, Louis Mulcahy Pottery; Mahmood Hussain, Inch Beach House, Cottages and Campsite; Pádraig Ó Sé, Páidi Ó Sé's Pub) in January 2024 and July 2025.

Interviews were also held with the project co-ordinator and SEC lead in May 2024, September 2024 and February 2025. Feedback from interviews was collated and fed back in written form to management group and subsequently discussed in online meetings. De-briefs, involving written feedback and group discussion, were also organised to explore the learnings from the solar tendering process and the Energy Master Plan launch. This learning brief has been reviewed and agreed by all participants.



SECTION 1: Background

The catchment for the Corca Dhuibhne Tourism and Hospitality Sustainable Energy Community (T&H SEC) corresponds to the West Kerry electoral area, which goes from Dún Chaoin on the west, to Blennerville on the north and Castlemaine on the south of the Dingle Peninsula. The area includes coastline, mountainous terrain and vibrant Gaeltacht villages.

There are 337 tourism and hospitality businesses on the Dingle Peninsula. The concentration of tourism enterprises reflects the area's popularity as a destination for both domestic and international visitors. Key places to visit include Dingle town, Dún Chaoin, Annascaul and Maharees. Seasonal fluctuations in population and energy demand are significant, driven by high visitor numbers during peak months, which underscores the importance of sustainable energy planning.

INITIAL DRIVERS FOR PROJECT

Brendan Tuohy, in his role as a Board Member of Dingle Hub

Brendan had a vision and overview of what was needed on the peninsula and shared this with John Griffin (KCC) and Declan Murphy (Fáilte Ireland), who advocated strongly for the project within their respective organisations. Brendan also opened doors within the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and SEAI, and was an important mentor.

The experience of, and learnings from, the West Kerry Dairy Farmers (WKDF) SEC

Dinny Galvin, chair of WKDF SEC, spotted the potential for developing a sectoral SEC with dairy farmers. After seeing the potential for heat exchange in pubs, he was convinced it could also apply to the tourism sector. By this time, the WKDF SEC, with the support of Dingle Hub, had done a lot of the heavy lifting, particularly in relation to developing a solar tender. Therefore, the farmers were an inspiration, and they were there to provide advice and support.

“ We were in awe of what they had done, the engagement that they got, and that's when we said we should be doing something similar for the tourism side of it. It was wonderful that that template was there, and that Dinny was available to advise us, and Deirdre had the structure from the Dingle Hub. It's very hard for us without having somebody on the ground, and the dedicated capacity to do this. Otherwise, it remains a wish, and you can't actually implement it.

Declan, January 2024

“ The Dingle Hub are leaders in innovation, sustainability and energy use, so to work in partnership with them was definitely an exciting opportunity.

Máire, January 2024

Sustainability had become a buzzword

Sustainability had become an important issue for the agencies, especially with the then government.

“ A lot of Fáilte Ireland's work in tourism is in product development and marketing, particularly for the domestic market. But, over the last three to five years, our work has seen a significant increase in focus on sustainability and environment, it is now at the core of all our operations, and this is a hugely positive thing. We now have environmental experts working within our Fáilte Ireland team, which we wouldn't have had before. Climate action isn't on the agenda, it is the agenda, and for that reason we felt that it was imperative that we, as the National Tourism Authority should show leadership in this space.

Declan, January 2024

The Dingle peninsula itself

There are two predominant sectors, tourism and agriculture, on the peninsula. They are not being filtered out or diluted by other sectors that might exist. Also, the community is used to working together to make change happen.

“Living on a peninsula could be perceived as a challenge, but it is an ideal place to do a project like this, because it is a defined area, with a strong sense of place and a close-knit community who are used to coming together and working on different projects together to sustain life on the peninsula.

Helen, January 2024

The COVID pandemic

The pandemic and associated lockdowns played an important role.

“During COVID we saw the vulnerability of our sectors here in Kerry, tourism, agriculture, places like the Dingle peninsula were really hit and so many businesses closed. There's a recognition that we need to diversify, and we need to build in resilience to our economy.

Máire, January 2024

The time was right

This was the perfect time to do this project. High energy costs were washing through from the previous year's accounts, there was massive pressure on food and labour, so the businesses were under pressure to save money wherever they could. There's been an awakening in the last two to three years that we really need to get on with it.

“If you'd asked me five years ago, would I be involved in this project? I would probably have said no, it was another agency's challenge or issue, however I think the environment has changed significantly. Now, this type of project forms a key part of our strategic aims and objectives, not only due to rising costs and the continued challenges in this space for the tourism industry, but also because people have become so much more aware of their environmental impact and have become more conscious of their carbon footprint.

Declan, January 2024

PROJECT PARTNERS

Fáilte Ireland
Údarás na Gaeltachta
Kerry County Council
Dingle Hub
Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance
DCSix Technologies

MANAGEMENT GROUP

Declan Murphy & Daithí Gallagher, Fáilte Ireland,
John Griffin & Helen O'Connor Barry,
Kerry County Council (John retired in October
2023 and was replaced by Helen)
Maire Ní Mhainín, Údarás na Gaeltachta
Deirdre de Bhailís, Dingle Hub
Jonathan Sandham and Barry Bambury,
DCSix Technologies
Ann Ní Chíobháin, T&H SEC Project Co-ordinator
Martin Bealin, T&H SEC Leader

STEERING GROUP

Jim Garvey, Benners Hotel, Skellig Hotel,
SuperValu, Dingle
Helen Heaton, Castlewood House, Dingle
Mahmood Hussain, Inch Beach House,
Cottages and Campsite, Inch
Denise Begley, An Riasc B&B
Margaret Flannery, Murphy's Ice Cream
Lorcan Slattery, Dingle Garden Town House
Lasse Mulcahy, Louis Mulcahy Handmade Pottery,
Baile na Fheirtéaraigh
Rose Spillane, Spillane's Bar, Maharees
Mícheál Ó Coileáin, Sciúird Archaeological Tours
Áine Uí Dhubhshláine, Tig Áine,
Baile na Fheirtéaraigh
Páidí Ó Sé, Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca
Dhuibhne
Caroline Boland, Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance

MEMBERS

By August 2025, 146 businesses had joined the Sustainable Energy Community (SEC).



From top:

1. Corca Dhuibhne Community Forum and businesses in Dingle initiative to encourage the public to bring their own cup.
2. Solar install Castlewood and Heaton's Guesthouse as part of the T&H SEC project.
3. Helan Heaton and Barry Bambury (DC Six) installing an energy monitor to the business.
4. Áine Uí Dhubhshláine at ESB Head Office Dublin at the Ireland's Greenest Place awards.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMMUNITY

Building on the momentum of the WKDF SEC and Dinny's insights into opportunities within the tourism and hospitality sector, Dingle Hub initiated engagement with relevant agencies to secure resources for a new project. Recognising that meaningful acceleration required more than volunteer effort, we advocated for dedicated funding to support delivery.

Although we began proposing the project in late 2021, it wasn't until January 2023 that it officially commenced. One of the first milestones was securing support from Údarás na Gaeltachta through the Scéim Forbartha Turasóireachta, which enabled the recruitment of a dedicated co-ordinator. This, in turn, helped unlock additional funding from Fáilte Ireland and Kerry County Council to support the Champion role, EMP development, operational costs, the learning brief, and Dingle Hub's participation.

In order to shorten the timeframe, the group did not apply to SEAI for the funding to carry out an Energy Master Plan because this could take up to six to eight months.

Instead, the project proceeded independently allowing it to move forward more rapidly and get to the 'Do' stage. Rather than relying heavily on volunteers and steering group participation, the project was supported by a dedicated coordinator, whose role was central to managing the workload, maintaining momentum and ensuring consistent communication across stakeholders. This reduced the burden typically placed on community volunteers and enabled a greater focus on delivery of project goals.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the SEC was to provide practical support to local businesses to build sustainable communities and promote the region as a green destination, which will be a major tourist attraction.

The objectives were to:

- establish a Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) for tourism businesses on the Dingle Peninsula;
- develop an Energy Master Plan for the Corca Dhuibhne tourism industry that will provide guidance to local businesses on how to implement fundamental changes to reduce the carbon emissions of their business as well as their monthly overheads;
- monitor the number of Master Plan recommendations implemented by local businesses to measure the impact of the plan and regularly analyse the carbon reduction of local industry;
- promote Corca Dhuibhne as an exemplar of sustainability to tourists and to encourage other areas to develop and implement such a masterplan in their area.

FUNDING

This project is a turning point for the sustainability work on the Dingle Peninsula, in that Fáilte Ireland, Kerry County Council and Údarás na Gaeltachta paid for the co-ordination and engagement roles, and they also recognised the value of the Dingle Hub structure and agreed to pay for their services.

FUNDER	WHAT WAS FUNDED
Fáilte Ireland	Development of Energy Master Plan (DCSix) 15 audits (DCSix) Project lead (Martin) (December 2022 - October 2024 (80 days) Reflective learning and evaluation (January 2024 - September 2025) Circuit level energy monitoring at 12 businesses allowing a clear breakdown of how and when energy is consumed within the businesses (DCSix) Development and co-ordination of EMP and sectoral questionnaire (DCSix)
Údarás na Gaeltachta	Project co-ordination (December 2022-December 2024)
Kerry County Council Fáilte Ireland	Supporting the participation of the Dingle Hub
SEAI	9 Further Audits for businesses with energy costs above €10,000 p/a

SECTION 2 : What Happened

PROJECT TIMELINE

This first phase of the project was officially launched on 9 March 2023 and continued until September 2025. The project co-ordinator began work in January 2023 and was in place until the end of February 2025. The baseline, analysis and data gathering was carried out by DCSix Technologies (including audits and Wattrics monitoring) between January 2023 and March 2024.

PROJECT MILESTONES/EVENTS

TIMEFRAME	VENUE	WORK FOCUS
January 2023		Ann and Martin began working in their part-time roles as Project Co-ordinator and SEC Leader
9 March 2023	Blasket Centre, Dún Chaoin	Corca Dhuibhne Tourism & Hospitality SEC Launch. Included presentations by Duncan Stewart, Caroline Boland (DPTA) and Ann and Martin. Lunch was provided. Over 70 people attended.
21 March 2023	Online	First T&H SEC members group meeting. 12 people attended.
6 April 2023	Údarás Na Gaeltachta, Milltown, Dingle	First in person meeting with steering group 18 people attended.
17 April 2023	Skellig Hotel, Dingle	The first management group meeting. Meetings were monthly but every two weeks during busy periods. They were mainly held online.
24 April 2023	Online	Members meeting. Aileen Deasy, Fáilte Ireland spoke about the FI carbon calculator and online toolkit. Seven people attended
12 May 2023		DCSix officially begins work after financial agreement with Fáilte Ireland
25 May 2023		Energy questionnaire sent out to SEC members.
21 August 2023		Launch of 3-min video introducing SEC and encouraging businesses to fill out energy questionnaire <i>See link: Dingle Hub SEC 3min website HD 1080p</i>
19 September 2023		Participating businesses who filled out their energy questionnaires were put into a draw for two energy monitors, worth €2,000 each (funded by Fáilte Ireland). Fitzgerald's Junction Bar, Camp and An Díseart, Dingle were the winners.
September 2023		ENPOWER, a three-year project aiming to improve energy systems by empowering citizens and fostering energy-secure communities through innovative methodologies and technologies, was granted funding by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme. As part of the project a community-focused digital platform is being trialled by DCSix with members of the T&H SEC on the Dingle peninsula. The aim of the platform is to lower energy spending through community meitheals instead of taking an individual household approach (see Appendix).

TIMEFRAME	VENUE	WORK FOCUS
11 October 2023	Dingle Hub	Presentation on T&H SEC to a group of Connemara tourism businesses. Organised by Fáilte Ireland.
25 October 2023	Údaras na Gaeltachta, Milltown, Dingle	Members meeting and launch of Solar PV Plan. 25 people attended.
21 November 2023 - 16 January 2024		Intensive work carried out by team and DCSix, developing and circulating tender for solar PV companies, scoring process and choosing which company to go with. Reps of the steering committee were involved in the final selection. Solar Beo was the successful applicant. This work was carried out as a subsequent tendering round, leveraging the outcomes of the original tender for solar which was completed with the WKDF a few months before the T&H SEC.
24 January 2024	Údaras na Gaeltachta, Milltown, Dingle	Members meeting to launch the solar PV drive (Solar 1) and introduce Solar Beo. 12 people attended.
10 February 2024	Dinny Galvin's Farm, Lispole	Site visit to Dinny's farm. Introduction to West Kerry Dairy Farmers SEC; Solar Beo explained Dinny's solar PV system and hot water diverter; Demonstration of heat recovery unit. Organised by Dingle Hub. Six people from the T&H SEC attended.
29 May 2024	The Post Office, Ventry	Solar PV Open Day for T&H SEC members, with input from Kerry Local Enterprise Office and Solar Beo. Jim Long, Post Office owner, was there to talk to attendees and answer questions. Fifteen people attended.
23 October 2024 10.30am-12.30pm	An Díseart, Dingle	Launch of Energy Master Plan, with guest speaker, travel writer, Pól Ó Conghaile. Niamh Ferriter, Café na Trá, spoke about how beneficial solar PV has been for her business. Declan (Fáilte Ireland), Jonathan (DCSix) and Ann and Martin (T&H SEC) also made presentations. The second solar PV drive was announced. The ENPOWER project and engaged app were introduced. 59 people attended.
18 November 2024	Greenmount House B&B, Dingle	Solar PV Open Day for T&H SEC members. Gary Curran (Greenmount House). Cian (Solar Beo) and Martin (T&H SEC) contributed. The second solar PV drive (Solar 2) was promoted. 12 people attended.
20 November 2024 11.30am-1.30pm 7.00pm-9.00pm	Benners Hotel, Main Street, Dingle	'Energy Efficiency Workshop for Your Business' (two time slots) How to take control of your energy bills; save money with low-cost energy efficiency measures; communicating your sustainable story with team & customers through education. Eight people attended.
18 February - 20 February 2025	Lisbon, Portugal	ENPOWER members' event. Ann presented on how communities like T&H SEC could use the Engage app, the advantages and the learnings from those who are trialling it.
5 March 2025 7.00pm-8.30pm	Benners Hotel, Dingle	Solar Efficiency Workshop - <i>Maximise your Solar PV Potential</i> Learn to use your solar PV efficiently for your business; telling your customers your sustainable story; info on SEAI Energy Upgrade grants; access to energy experts for Q&A Supported by ENPOWER. 20 people attended.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

DEIRDRE DE BHAILÍS **Dingle Hub, Project Oversight** *(Funded by Kerry County Council & Fáilte Ireland)*

Deirdre's work:

As manager of Dingle Hub, Deirdre provided strategic oversight and management for the project. She represented the project in regular management meetings with partners - Fáilte Ireland, Kerry County Council, and Údarás na Gaeltachta - to ensure alignment on objectives and actions. She successfully secured EU funding for the Enpower project, enabling continuity beyond Phase 1 and also guided the development of a clear and engaging graphical representation of the Energy Master Plan. Currently, Deirdre is leading the development of Phase 2 proposals to secure continued agency support and expand the model across County Kerry.

ANN NÍ CHÍOBHÁIN **Project Co-ordinator** *(Employed by Dingle Hub, funded by Údarás na Gaeltachta)*

Ann's work involved:

Research (e.g., RE technologies, available grants/supports); facilitating bi-weekly meetings with management group, reporting at monthly Údarás meetings, attending Dingle Hub meetings; regular meetings, visits/cold-calls, e-mails and phone calls with T&H businesses; organising project events and workshops; project spokesperson; co-ordinating PR and media/social media, video and photographic coverage, presence on Dingle Hub website, production and distribution of questionnaires, posters, fliers, publicity for events; helping to develop solar PV tender process; assisting with project accounts and budgeting; attending outside meetings and events, preparing/giving presentations, knowledge sharing with interested parties and supporting other related activities (e.g., ENPOWER, Dingle Coffee Cup project)

MARTIN BEALIN **SEC Leader** *(Paid as consultant by Fáilte Ireland)*

Martin's work involved:

Engagement with all potential stakeholders, e-mails, calls and in person meetings; establishing terms of reference for the project; establishing steering group; ensuring a geographical and sectoral mix within the monitoring and audit group to represent the entire T&H industry on the peninsula and facilitate the development of sectoral roadmaps/case studies for use elsewhere; working with Ann and DCSix to compose questionnaire and gather valuable information from those not monitored; research available grants/supports; attending bi-weekly meetings with management group and regular Dingle

Hub meetings; working with Ann to organise project events and workshops; production and distribution of questionnaires, posters, fliers, publicity for events; helping to develop solar PV tender process; attending outside meetings and events; preparing/giving presentations; sharing knowledge with interested parties and supporting other related activities (e.g. ENPOWER); working with Ann and graphic designer on delivering the EMP message in a more accessible way.

BARRY BAMBURY, Lead Energy Auditor; **JONATHAN SANDHAM, Project Delivery;** **and MICHAEL LEE, Monitoring Lead,** **DCSix Technologies** *(All funded by Fáilte Ireland)*

Barry, Jonathan and Mike's work involved:

Co-ordination and delivery of all monitoring, auditing and data associated with creation of the baseline for the Energy Master Plan; development of online questionnaire to enable all T&H members to respond with specific energy and business details; development of methodology enabling the community to be summarised into five thematic streams; creation of individual Register of Opportunities (RoO) for each audited business; development of community level RoO for the EMP; analysis and reporting on the different types of businesses and common themes for energy efficiency opportunities; technical and financial review of tender responses; Quality Assurance on initial offering from tender to ensure that members would realise the outcome; support, guidance and knowledge sharing with project team, management group and T&H members; oversight support and governance recommendations for structure of the community; creators of webinar, workshop and presentation content with Ann and Martin; overall delivery of the EMP document and supporting data; developers of the summarised EMP, thematic summaries for each business and roadmaps in line with common themes derived from the auditing and questionnaire process; continual feedback and support on the ongoing efforts in energy efficiency with team and members.

CLARE WATSON **Reflective Learning/Evaluation Lead** *(funded by Fáilte Ireland)* **January 2024 - September 2025**

Clare's work involved:

Holding online interviews with members of management group, project team and six of the participating businesses; collating and analysing feedback and leading online discussions; organising de-briefs; drawing material into a learning brief and facilitating further input and review by all involved.

DEVELOPMENT OF ENERGY MASTER PLAN

The goal of the Energy Master Plan (EMP) was to review the existing energy practices undertaken by the community and to provide a roadmap for efficient, practical, cost-effective recommendations for energy efficiency measures across the SEC.

It was agreed by the management group that DCSix Technologies, an independent energy consultancy, would develop the EMP and carry out the energy audits and monitoring required. DCSix had gained valuable experience developing the Energy Master Plan for the West Kerry Dairy Farmers (WKDF) SEC in 2021/22.

The baseline and analysis were carried out between January 2023 and March 2024, with the aim of identifying energy consumption patterns, benchmarking energy performance, creating common business types and classification of buildings, and proposing energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities for the sector. All energy baselines were based on 2022 billing data and 2023 monitoring data.

WORK OUTLINE

The work was broken down into the following stages:

1. Conduct data gathering exercise via online questionnaire
2. Install energy monitoring in 16 businesses.
3. Carry out energy audits in 21 businesses.
4. Provide a baseline of total energy usage estimates for participating businesses.
5. Provide detailed recommendations for energy efficiency at an individual businesses level.
6. Establish a Register of Opportunities for the reduction of energy demand and the transition to renewable energy supply by the SEC members.
7. Provide a roadmap and action plan to implement the recommended Register of Opportunities in a prioritised way.

Initial Information was gathered using an online energy questionnaire that shared with all community members, over 50% of whom submitted their fuel consumption for 2022 (69 completed questionnaires). 16 businesses were selected from this group to have energy monitoring installed at their premises for the duration of the project and to receive an energy audit. This group was chosen to reflect the range of tourism and hospitality businesses on the peninsula and in tourist towns across Ireland.

The 16 businesses were:

Pubs:

- Páidí Ó Sé's Pub, Ventry;
- Murphy's Pub, Brandon;
- Paul Geaney's Bar, Dingle.

Restaurants/Coffee Shops:

- Fitzgerald's Junction Bar, Camp;
- Eat Dingle, Dingle;
- Ashes's Coffee Shop, Dingle;
- The Half Door, Dingle;
- Solas Tapas, Dingle.

Hotels/B&B's:

- Benner's Hotel, Dingle;
- Skellig Hotel, Dingle;
- An Riasc B&B, Ballydavid;
- Castlewood House, Dingle.

Other:

- An Díseart Institute of Irish Spirituality and Culture, Dingle;
- Louis Mulcahy Handmade Pottery, Ballyferriter;
- Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium, Dingle;
- Blennerville Windmill and Visitor Centre, Blennerville.

An additional five businesses were also chosen for audit and the data contributed to the development of the EMP.

All members were invited to complete a further questionnaire to which there was a 56% response rate. In addition, 12 months of electricity bills were analysed for the 21 audited locations.

Data gathered was extrapolated to provide an energy baseline, to model the sector total (all 337 businesses) and to demonstrate the energy usage of the different types of tourism business, e.g., hotel, B&B / guesthouse, pub, café, campsite and activity provider / visitor attraction.



KEY POINTS FROM EMP | What have we learned

KEY POINTS FROM EMP

After reviewing and analysing the output of the audits and monitoring, it was possible to demonstrate common opportunities across all the categories of the community which should be considered for accelerated implementation. These were:

1. Energy Rate
2. Solar PV
3. Fabric Upgrades
4. LED Lighting
5. Refrigeration Upgrades
6. Heat Recovery
7. Space Heating Upgrades
8. Water Heating Upgrades
9. Electrification of Fleet
10. Substitution of Transport Fuels to Biofuels

The Energy Master Plan was launched on 23 October 2024. It can be accessed here: [20241209-EMP__ENG.pdf](#)

A summary document of the EMP is available here: [Corca-Dhuibne-Tourism-and-Hospitality-SEC_FINAL](#)

A number of case studies have been included, outlining the specific roadmap for delivery of a 13-bedroom guesthouse in Dingle town, a busy bar/restaurant in a rural location and a small coffee shop.

SOLAR TENDER PROCESS

STAGE 1

Prepare request for quotation (RFQ)

In August 2023, the West Kerry Dairy Farmers SEC sent a request for quotes for solar PV to 11 companies. Seven companies responded. The WKDF SEC steering group, DCSix Technologies and an independent energy advisor, narrowed the list down to three. Each company was interviewed by the reviewing team, and one was chosen.

In November 2023, using the above process as a stepping stone, the Tourism & Hospitality SEC decided to send out a request for quotes to the same top three companies. Two companies responded. No interviews were held.

STAGE 2

Review responses

DCSix had previously been involved in developing a PV tender scoring system for the West Kerry Dairy Farmers SEC. In December/January 2024, together with Ann and Martin they revised this framework to make it specific to the T&H sector. Points were allocated to the following: hardware, software, warranty, workmanship, delivery, aftercare, visual impact and price. Higher points were allocated to the number of installations in each category to make the marking fair. 50% of the points were allocated on pricing.

The T&H SEC steering group was invited to participate in the reviewing process but only one responded. Ann and Martin then asked another four members directly (to ensure an uneven number to avoid a tie-break) and they agreed to take part. Three of the steering group members were from the bigger businesses installing solar, the other two were business owners who were not planning to install solar at this stage but had an interest in solar PV, renewable energy and sustainability.

STAGE 3 Scoring

A few days before the review session, the five steering group members were e-mailed the tender documents from the two companies and, the night before, received the scoring sheet to look over. On Thursday 11th January, they came to the Dingle Hub to score the two companies. Deirdre spoke briefly about

the WKDF SEC, Barry clarified the technical detail and Ann and Martin explained the marking system and went through the other sections of the scoring sheet, referring to relevant quotes from the RFT documents. Jonathon observed and logged the scores from each member. When the session ended, there were still some unanswered questions, so Ann and Martin brought these to the companies by e-mail and phoned their responses to each of the five steering group members. There was then a bit of back and forth, with more phone calls and two on-line discussions before the final scores were agreed and Solar Beo was chosen. The discount offered to T&H SEC businesses was in and around 20%, depending on size of roof, installation, etc.

SECTION 3 : Solar PV Installations

SOLAR INSTALLATIONS IN TOURISM & HOSPITALITY SEC MEITHEALS (Jan 2025)	BUSINESSES THAT SIGNED UP FOR SOLAR PV	BUSINESSES THAT INSTALLED SOLAR PV
Solar PV Round 1 - 2023	30	20
Solar PV Round 2 - 2024	10	7
Total	37	27
SOLAR INSTALLATIONS IN TOURISM & HOSPITALITY SECTOR BY OTHER PV PROVIDERS ¹		19
<p>A total of 648.5kW of solar PV was installed, either directly or indirectly, by the SEC, with an estimated investment of €580,000 by the businesses.</p> <p>Overall, this amount of solar PV on the peninsula should generate about 568,000 kWh/year, which is worth €142,000/year.</p>		

¹ The T&H SEC highlighted the importance of solar PV and helped convince T&H businesses to install their own systems. Not all businesses chose to join the meitheals. Therefore, it's important to also highlight the number of systems that were installed by other PV companies during the time period.

SECTION 4 : What was Achieved

‘It was new, it was exciting, we embraced it, and we went for it. I think we got a huge amount right. Not everything went 100% the way you want it, but that's always the case. I'd certainly be very proud of what was achieved.’

Declan, July 2025

Launch of T&H SEC

On 9 March 2023, a very successful launch was held in the Blasket Centre, Dún Chaoin, with Duncan Stewart as keynote speaker. Other presentations were given by Caroline Boland (DPTA) and Ann and Martin. Over 70 people attended.

SEC membership

120 tourism and hospitality businesses signed up as members (during and after the launch). The number had increased to 135 by August 2025.

Energy monitoring

- 64 energy questionnaires were filled out by businesses, out of an initial target of 80.
- 18 energy monitors were installed in businesses in July/August 2023.
- 40 energy audits were carried out during the time period, 25 of which were used in the development of the EMP (30 supported by SEAI, 10 funded by Fáilte Ireland)

Solar PV tender

In mid-January 2024, Jonathan, Barry, Ann and Martin, along with five members of the Steering Committee completed a rigorous selection process to identify the successful company, Solar Beo. A very good group discount and follow-up support package was agreed.

“ We have every confidence it was a robust process. We were lucky to have a good team with us and that the WKDF SEC had done initial groundwork, but this would not necessarily be the same in all locations.

Martin & Ann, January 2024

Solar installations

Two Solar PV meitheals were organised by the project team. The first was announced in January 2024, the second in October 2024. Throughout 2024 and up to August 2025, Solar Beo carried out 36 solar PV installations with T&H SEC members. Within the same time period, a further 19 solar PV systems were installed by other solar PV providers on the premises of tourism and hospitality businesses in the area. This adds up to a total of 602 kWp of solar energy created directly or indirectly by the SEC.

Collective price reduction for the businesses

Working as a group with the one solar installer, Solar Beo, resulted in savings of up to 20% (depending on size of installation, location, etc) This was in addition to the SEAI solar PV grant which covered up to 23% of the total cost.

“ For the smaller businesses, getting a reduction in price is really important, and it alleviates some of the risk.

Helen, July 2025

Energy Master plan, summary document and a clear roadmap

“ The Energy Master Plan gives examples by category of what you can do to improve your business. At the bottom level there are actions that won't cost the business anything and then it progresses to others that have costs associated with them. So, it is very much a graduated scale of what you can do, whether you're a restaurant, caravan camping park, hotel, bed and breakfast or visitor attraction.

Declan, July 2025

Launch of the Energy Master plan and summary booklet

On 23 October 2024, the Energy Master Plan was launched in An Díseart, with travel writer Pól Ó Conghaile as keynote speaker. Niamh Firtear, Café na Trá, spoke about how beneficial solar PV has been for her business. Declan (Fáilte Ireland), Jonathan (DCSix) and Ann and Martin (T&H SEC) also made presentations. Some copies of the full EMP were available, but attendees were each given a short booklet (in Irish and English) which included the roadmap with action steps for each business type/category. 59 people attended.

Open days and workshops

On 10 February 2024, T&H SEC members were invited to Dinny Galvin's farm to see his solar PV system, hot water diverter and heat recovery unit. Two Open Days were then held in SEC members' premises to demonstrate their solar PV systems in action were held in SEC members' premises. The first was held on 29 May 2024 at Ventry Post Office and the second on 18 November 2024 at Greenmount House B&B in Dingle. Two

workshops were subsequently organised in Benners' Hotel, Dingle, the first on 20 November 2024 focused on energy efficiency and the second on 5 March 2025 focused on solar PV efficiency.

Extensive PR/media/social media coverage -

A three-minute video, setting out the background and aims of the project, was released in July 2023. The team also spread the word locally through interviews in Radio Kerry and Raidio na Gaeltachta, articles in The Kerryman, Kerry's Eve and West Kerry Live and through social media platforms. In July 2025, the Irish Times printed an article 'How Dingle Peninsula is modelling a new way for rural Ireland to thrive', which included interviews with Áine Uí Dhubhshláine, Tig Áine; Daniel McCarthy, Dingle Linen Service; Ann, T&H SEC; and Deirdre, Dingle Hub. For more information, see appendix 2.

We brought the tourism and hospitality sector together to look at sustainability

Businesses are now providing mutual support, and sharing experiences, with each other and getting economies of scale by purchasing together.

“ While businesses naturally need to collaborate, they are also in competition with one another. So, it has been extremely valuable to have a project that encourages collective action toward a shared goal for the entire sector. We can demonstrate that the Dingle Peninsula is capable of leading by example - serving as a showcase for other regions - while also achieving meaningful progress in terms of environmental stewardship and sustainability within our own community.

Helen, July 2025

People are more aware, informed and empowered

“ When we had our first solar event people were asking really basic questions, they were asking way more detailed questions this time. They knew more. I think that we probably inspired them to do a bit more research into it. They had gone to our open days, had a look themselves, and then asked really good questions.

Ann, February 2025

“ The learning curve was just impressive. At the public meetings you see people sitting down quietly, gathering snippets of information from one meeting to the next meeting, probably getting more confident as well, with regard to how they're picking up the information, how this best fits into their own business model, and what can be achieved.

Máire, July 2025

“ There's talk about it now. We don't have to introduce ourselves so much anymore. So that's what it's all about, getting people to put it front and centre.

Martin, Feb 2025

“ I think what's excited me is to see the change, people have gone from maybe being a little bit passive about energy bills, to actually being engaged with them and looking positively towards using solar and using sustainable energy sources.

Declan, July 2025

“ It's a movement now. You create a culture, and a state of mind where people are thinking sustainability. I think that's the biggest achievement, it's a kind of attitudinal, or cultural change.

Declan, July 2025

We have fostered a great cohort of early adopters

This phase of the project has worked very closely with the early adopters to make sure they were supported on their journey.

“ I've really enjoyed connecting people, and then I really get a buzz out of seeing other people being excited over it. There's probably 10 or 12 that have really done a lot, and it's great seeing them being so happy about it. I like that people are feeling empowered.

Ann, July 2025

“ Businesses are now awakened to all of this. They progress from solar panels, to then having electric vehicles and then possibly water harvesting, to dealing with food waste, and then other things. Once they enjoy success with one aspect, they then start looking around, so what else can I do? And every business will be different, for example hotels installing movement sensors for their public area lighting.

Declan, July 2025

There is demonstrable, visible progress

“ I like to see progress in everything. When you actually see the Solar Beo vans outside premises, that's progress, when you see people buying into it and making a significant investment. So that is exciting. And it's not just exciting for the commercial part of the business. It's exciting for the fact that the issue of energy use is being addressed. That's an added bonus that will enhance the commercial viability of the business, as well as addressing the environmental issues.

Máire, July 2025

“ I'm really hoping that we are on the cusp of that ripple effect.

Deirdre, July 2025

The management group has learnt a lot

“ What I learned early on was don't go telling people you know anything about anything because you don't. I'm learning, I've learned an awful lot last year about energy.
Martin, 2024

“ When we started the project, I didn't know much about the technicalities of solar, energy use or kilowatts. I have a much better understanding now and feel more informed and comfortable in discussing it.
Helen, July 2025

“ I wasn't very learned with regard to the whole aspect of renewable energies at the beginning, kilowatts, measurements, the apps, the inverters, the terms, everything. Having that along the way was a huge learning curve.
Máire, July 2025

“ I've learned loads. I didn't understand what the role was when I started. Now I feel more confident talking to people about it and more educated and more aware myself, definitely.
Ann, February 2025

Mutually beneficial links have been developed with and between other groups, projects and networks

There is cross over with projects such as West Kerry Dairy Farmers SEC, Enpower, Cabbie (research project on biogas) and The Dingle Cup Project. Declan provided a link with the implementation group of the Fáilte Ireland DEDP (Destination Experience Development Plan) for Dingle. In June 2025, the T&H SEC and Dingle Hub were asked to find businesses/households on the Dingle Peninsula to host electric car chargers (for public use), as part of the Easy Go trial. The trial also involved Phibsboro in Dublin and Kilcock in Kildare. 20 initial expressions of interest were secured on the Dingle Peninsula which was higher than the other pilot areas.

We have contributed to the development of community resilience

“ It's that diffusion of sustainability, it's the strengthening of local relationships. It's the people from Stradbally and Castlegregory and Maharees, getting to come to events, maybe over in Ventry, getting to know each other, and what they're doing, and building all of that.
Deirdre, July 2025

T&H SEC is now an exemplar and a leader

Communities taking ownership is key to the climate challenge, so it is important to have community-based demonstration projects that are seen to be successful. People in other areas, e.g. Killarney and Tralee, have been inspired by this project to set up groups of their own.

“ Kerry is the leading regional tourism destination in Ireland. Kerry should always be leading, not following. Sustainability is now front and center of all tourism strategies globally. So, the fact that we're taking the lead role, being an early adopter of the technology and all of that is very important.
John, January 2024

“ This SEC is being highlighted as a model of good practice. That recognition gives a sense of pride in a community.
Helen, July 2025

We have kickstarted conversations around a future vision for the sector

“ We've kickstarted the possibility of a sustainable destination, which I think is achievable on the Dingle Peninsula now.
Martin, July 2025

The efforts of the tourism and hospitality businesses were a strong contributing factor to the Dingle Peninsula receiving the 'Ireland's Greenest Places' award

In June 2025, the Irish Times in partnership with Electric Ireland launched a competition to find Ireland's Greenest Places. The judges were Mary Minahan, Irish Times Features Editor; Lisa Browne, Head of Marketing, Electric Ireland; Eamon Ryan, Former Green Party Leader and former Minister; Kevin O'Sullivan, Irish Times Environment and Science Editor; and Rosita Boland, Irish Times Senior Features Writer. In late June, Kevin O'Sullivan travelled to West Kerry and interviewed many of the people involved in sustainability initiatives on the peninsula, including a number of T&H SEC businesses. In September 2025, the Dingle Peninsula was announced as the overall winner.

WHAT WORKED

Local trust

Ann and Martin are well-known and respected locally. Both have experience in the hospitality trade in Dingle (Martin used to run the Global Village restaurant and Ann ran a food truck), and a keen interest in sustainability, community and local enterprise.

“It’s a phenomenal tool that you need in these endeavours, that local link and trust. The fact that the guys had that relationship already means that it’s not a cold start for the auditors.

Jonathan, January 2024

“It was vital that DCSix had a local person working with them. With questions coming from people with regard to installing solar panels he knew exactly where the house was, what aspect that house had, what were the prevailing winds. He was able to say, you would be better off doing this, that and the other. It’s an expensive product to install, so when you get that kind of buy in then it’s not being sold by somebody unknown. It’s sold by somebody who knows what the best fit is.

Máire, July 2025

Collaborating in a positive active way

This project opened up the opportunity for the five organisations (Fáilte Ireland, Kerry County Council, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Dingle Hub and DCSix) to collaborate and has also opened up avenues for continuing and future collaboration.

“I always use the analogy of a tug of war with a rope, if we’re all pulling the rope in the same direction, you can do things, if there’s people pulling the rope in a different direction, you’re not making progress. But when everybody gets in and starts pulling in the same direction, different state agencies, community groups, stakeholders and tourism trade, the power of that is incredible.

Declan, July 2025

“It’s a wonderfully positive project. When you’re working with people of that calibre who have that same passion, it’s just a joy to be part of it. I’ve been involved in tourism probably 35 years and I would rate this as being probably the most important project I’ve been involved in.

Declan, Jan 2024

The management group

“It was a natural fit. We all work very well together. We all had the same aims and aspirations. When you have that group set of people anything is possible, because they will do whatever it takes to get it done. They will find ways to make things happen.

Declan, July 2024

“This is a lovely project to be part of. We have all worked so well together because there is an understanding that we are all working together to achieve positive change.

Helen, July 2025

A resourced team on the ground

The range of skills within the team was broad and covered project co-ordination, stakeholder engagement and energy expertise which were all crucial to the success of this project. But a critical element was having the money to pay for them. This project did not have to rely solely on volunteers.

“It was unique in the sense that there was a partnership between the state organisations driving this. Without that you wouldn’t be able to employ a co-ordinator that brings it all together, who’s in direct contact with all the people, on a daily basis if needs be. If you were to run this on a voluntary basis you would have nobody to fall back on, nobody to alleviate concerns or be the link between the technical and the end user.

Máire, July 2025

“We set out to put that scaffolding there from the start. We understood that this would be really a key determinant of success or not. You can’t just do tokenism anymore. You can’t just say, everyone is for sustainability, of course they are, but then the next question is, what are you going to do about it?

Declan, July 2025

Regular well run management group meetings

Management group meetings were held online monthly, and during busy times, every two weeks.

“There was a regular update. Any issues that were forthcoming were discussed and solutions proposed. It worked well.

Máire, July 2025

“Ann and Martin have been highly effective in leading the project. Their meetings were focused and action-oriented - clear, concise, and purposeful. Each session centred on progress updates, next steps, and concrete outcomes, ensuring discussions remained fully on point.

Helen, July 2025

Being the honest broker

The key to what the SEC is doing is offering reliable facts, figures and impartial advice, so people can proceed in the confidence that they are getting the correct information.

“ One of the key things that's coming out is that people all want to do this, but they don't know how. They don't know where to go, and they don't know whether, if I do something now, is it future proofed? Will it be out of date in six months? And a lot of the advice they're getting is from people who are trying to sell them something.
Declan, January 2024 ”

“ People need the unbiased, genuine approach, so they know exactly what they should be doing, and to avoid scams.
Jonathan, January 2024 ”

Having good technical expertise

The role of the auditors is really important. They go in and exhaustively look at every option. During each audit, DCSix went into the building with the owner and usually spent half a day talking through their processes.

“ When you have an audit done, you've gone into the building, you've understood how much hot water they go through a day, what other things are on the premises, so beer cooler rooms, fridge freezers, walk in cold rooms.
Jonathan, January 2024 ”

Equally important is the ability of the auditor and energy consultant to communicate in a way that people can understand.

“ DCSix have been very good, providing the necessary technical expertise. It is important to have people who can communicate effectively, as discussions involving technical terms like kilowatts can easily become difficult for many to follow.
Helen, January 2024 ”

“ We'd be in muddy waters from start to finish without DCSix Technologies on board, both as consultants to the management and steering group and as partners in the public meetings.
Máire, July 2025 ”

Working with Dingle Hub

For projects like this to work you need an administrative base in the area, with relevant expertise and passion, and the ability to take risks.

“ Working in partnership with the Dingle Hub, who are leaders in these kinds of innovative projects around sustainability and energy use, was definitely an exciting opportunity.
Máire, January 2024 ”

“ The Hub is right in the centre of the whole thing and it's instrumental, without it there would be a lot more hard work for everybody in activating the whole setup.
Jonathan, January 2024 ”

“ Having that little reservoir of energy, and the staff and Directors, that creativity and that outward looking positivity is wonderful for us to see as a partner Agency.
Declan, January 2024 ”

“ It just wouldn't happen without the Hub, and the Hub needs to be resourced on its own, to be that umbrella piece for whatever project comes up and not be scraping around trying to pull it out of the projects. The project money is for the project. Why doesn't Deirdre have a fund just for the staff there? It wouldn't be expensive. It would be actually quite small. If we were all there, working all the time, we would just do enormous work.
Martin, May 2025 ”

The T&H businesses working together as a group

For the businesses there is strength and resilience in numbers.

“ When people try to tackle these things on their own and they feel alone, you can often feel, what is the point? What am I doing here? Whereas, if you know you've got a network of like-minded people who are doing similar things, you feel like you're contributing to something that is greater as a whole.
Deirdre, July 2025 ”

“ By presenting them outwards to the market as a group, they got more of a discount than they did of an SEAI grant.
Jonathan, July 2025 ”

Providing support, handholding and a reliable point of contact

Ann and Martin spent a lot of time, particularly at the early stages going out to businesses, phoning them, explaining the project, helping them with their energy questionnaires, informing them of events, reminding them to attend and being the point of contact for their questions, concerns, etc.

“ The handholding is so important. People can dig out the ESB bill, but they need somebody who's competent to then help them.
John, January 2024 ”

“ One thing I think is important is that there was a point of contact that people could say, oh, I can ring Ann and ask her about this, and she might not know the answer, but she'll know who to ask. I think that was a big thing.
Ann, February 2025 ”

“ People come to it at different stages, so you need to set it up, and then it needs to constantly be there so that people can go, I think I'm going to engage with that more now, and they go, right, I'll give them a buzz, I'm a member of that. So that resource has to be constantly there.

Martin, February 2025

“ It is very resource intensive with all of that hand holding yet we can just see that's what people want.

Deirdre, July 2025

Peer to peer influence and support

Don't underestimate the power of word of mouth and seeing your neighbours or friends making changes and gaining benefits.

“ Word of mouth about the positives of renewable energy probably works better than applying pressure to change. Hearing from their businesses in their community who have already adopted this technology is more constructive and encouraging.

Helen, January 2024

“ The amount of people who came up to me at the EMP launch saying that having Niamh talking about the impact solar PV had on her business was so good, just to see someone local sit up there and talk about how great it was, how easy it was, and how sceptical she was at the beginning, and that they survived the storms.

Ann, February 2025

“ The early adopters have seen value out of it, and they understand the strength of working together. They're going to be talking to many of the other businesses on the peninsula and that'll just build understanding more than we can ever do by beating the drum.

Deirdre, July 2025

Open days and workshops

People really appreciated the events and particularly, in the Open Days, the chance to question the property owners directly about their experience of installing solar PV and the impact. The solar panels at Ventry Post Office are ground mounted, which gave an added benefit.

“ You can actually go up and touch it, see how thick the panels are, how they're mounted, whereas when they're up on the roof, you're looking at them from a distance.

Maire, July 2025

“ Maybe only ten people came to the Ventry Open Day, but those ten people will get solar next time, it just shows people how it works, and they're not as frightened of it.

Ann, September 2024

“ I love the events, they're what excite me really and getting people together and having a cup of tea and a slice of cake and seeing what other people are doing, and that information sharing between people. That's when I'm at my happiest, because I'm like, here are two businesses who might not have spoken before. And now they're sharing knowledge and tips with each other.

Ann, May 2024

Summary version of the EMP

It was important that the main points and recommendations could be presented in a graphic and accessible way.

“ We wanted something small that people could consume. Nobody's going to read the full report, but you have to have it as the background and the weight that you're leaning against.

Jonathan, July, 2025

Real action and a practical output

This project was action driven and concrete. It was not just a talking shop.

“ Sustainability is something that can be very broad. What worked was that it is a focussed output. The Energy Master Plan is quite straightforward and provides a roadmap and steps for any hospitality business to take.

Helen, July 2025

“ That to me was a real battery recharger, to see this stuff in action, and to see there are people who are thrilled not to be alone, and who value the advice that they're getting through this work, and they value it enough to take action out of it.

Deirdre, July 2025

Patience

“ Much and all as we'd love people just to focus in on this all the time, the reality that we're finding is that they can't. You have to just bide your time and be ready to jump in when they do and be ready to work around their schedules.

Declan, July 2025

Reflective learning and evaluation

“ It excites me a lot to see the things that I would hope for, and that I think we're aiming for, being reflected back in the interviews with the businesspeople. I have got energy from the feedback and seeing that people are valuing what we do.

Deirdre, July 2025

CHALLENGES

The scale of the climate change challenge

“ *The scale of the challenge, looking at it at a national level, has been exposed even more through this project, when you see the level of depth that is required to get to action.*

Deirdre, July 2025

Tourism and timing

The project launched in March but then ran into the busy summer season, so it was difficult to engage business-people during the summer when they were at their busiest. Even outside of the summer period, when organising meetings and events it is difficult to pick a time of day that suited everyone. Some are trading during the day while others are trading in the evening. So, the approach Ann and Martin took was to have meetings at different times of the day to suit those requirements. Overall, they concluded that mid-morning was the optimum time.

“ *It's challenging working with the tourism sector. When people are in high season, they're totally engaged, and then when they're in off season, they need some recovery time. There's a very small window at either end of those times where you can get productive time with people.*

Declan, January 2024

The geographical nature and spread of the tourism industry

It has been more difficult to reach businesses from the other end of the peninsula, and outside of Dingle town.

“ *It's actually just a huge area, there's so many B&Bs that we could help getting solar. But how do we just drive around, it would take so long.*

Ann, September 2024

The slow rate of progress

The rate of active progress and level of engagement from the businesses was much lower than initially expected.

“ *I think that's because of the nature of these kinds of projects and all the different funders and that's new to me. Getting sign-off from management, it just takes that bit longer. But while that's happening, you don't want the members to think that you're not doing anything. So I do want to let them know that I am here, I'm willing to help if they want me to help.*

Ann, May 2024

“ *You have to remember that there's a lot of businesses on the peninsula who actually haven't heard about the SEC at all. It just really shows you how slow things are.*

Ann, September 2024

Delays in securing initial funding

A lot of time and effort is required by the Dingle Hub to make sure that the work carried out aligns with financial budgets, while also ensuring that there is momentum within projects and that experienced staff can be retained. At times, it's a juggling act and any gaps that occur can be very challenging for all concerned, especially for the people who need to be paid. Therefore, it is important to make agreements with potential funding bodies well in advance. However, this may not be possible if it doesn't fit into the budgetary processes and timings of the potential funders. While there may be a will, there may not be a way.

The T&H SEC was essentially a pilot project that hadn't been tried and tested so there was no proof of concept. Therefore, it was hugely welcome that the partner agencies took a risk and provided funding for Phase 1. However, this took eighteen months to secure and there was a hiatus in funding on two occasions, which was difficult for the workers and affected project momentum.

Separately, the amount of time required for the SEC leader role was underestimated and when the time ran out there was no funding to extend the role. This, and particularly the uncertainty around it, was difficult and deeply affected team morale mid-way through the project. Thankfully Dingle Hub was subsequently able to find other funding mechanisms to fill the gap.

Engaging the businesses and keeping them engaged

“ *It is always challenging getting people to attend events, getting them involved, getting them to see the bigger picture.*

Martin, July 2025

“ *We now have a few very good examples where you can point to, but in the early days, we didn't, and you're always looking for the first movers to see who's going to do this first. Once you have examples, then it's a lot easier. But without those examples, you're working that bit harder to try and convince people.*

Declan, July 2025

“ *The value of people coming together is evident to a central cohort of people. It's not as widespread as maybe my expectations were at the start. I think we have some fantastic examples. They are so heartening to see. But it's so difficult to get through to the wider cohort of people who are busy in the day to day, and this is not a priority for them.*

Deirdre, July 2025

“ *How do we reach them? Do you just have to go door to door, knocking? Politicians go canvassing, that obviously works. Is that the way to do it?*

Ann, July 2025

Getting the businesses to fill out their energy questionnaires

This seemed to be more challenging in the tourism and hospitality sector than with the dairy farmers. Ann and Martin found they had to make an appointment with many of the businesses to explain the importance of providing this data as a foundation stone, and then to work with them on securing and filling out the details.

“ It was very difficult for Ann and Martin to get the data in. It was incredibly difficult trying to get people to share their bills or to input their figures initially. Everyone wanted to but then there was the unglamorous side of getting out your bills and punching in numbers. Sometimes trudging through your utility bills is not exactly fun.

Declan, July 2025

“ Going up to people is hard. I always feel like I'm hassling them. Then you go into the pub for a drink, I still get people and it's a year later, if I'm out and they're like, I never filled out that questionnaire for you.

Ann, September 2024

Maintaining the level of handholding

“ We can't keep hand holding. You'd hope you would have the momentum to ensure that people then know how to continue implementing measures in their business. And you'd have got over critical mass at that point.

Deirdre, January 2024

Limited appetite for behaviour change

Despite highlighting a range of behavioural changes and low-cost actions (e.g. lowering thermostats, switching off lights, availing of night-saver electricity, installing light sensors and low energy bulbs), DCSix has not seen many being implemented by the audited businesses.

“ I think muscle memory is probably an age-old thing. If I can just put something in the corner to save me money, I'll do it, but if I have to change how I operate that's a tougher ask.

Jonathan, July 2025

Businesses can be more interested in asset investment than making behavioural changes, even though they create quick financial wins with no or low financial cost. The nature of tourist needs and expectations also means that the tourism sector is, to some extent, a victim of the people coming in the door, the kitchen has to operate around those times.

“ That's probably where tourism and hospitality is trickier than the agriculture one, because you can train the cows to come in a little bit earlier and make use of the night-rate electricity a bit better.

Jonathan, July 2025

Delay in agreeing the final EMP

There was a six-month delay in finalising the Energy Master Plan, largely because of edits required by the management group. This was time consuming and affected momentum within the project.

The technical side of the project

For many people, including some members of the management group, this was a steep learning curve.

“ It's a new language. It's a new terminology. That was the hardest to grasp. When they started talking about the different parts of the solar panels and the technical aspects of the equipment involved, they realized that most of the people that were listening to them didn't know what was meant and it was necessary to start with the basics.

Máire, July 2025

Lack of clarity on the role of the steering committee

The steering committee of 12 people was chosen by the project team to ensure a good geographic spread and representation across the different types of business. Initially, recorded on-line meetings were held, so that those who couldn't attend could click into the recordings afterwards. When this wasn't successful, more in-person meetings were held. The same six or seven people attended. A number of problems have been identified: The committee was too big, and it would have been better to work with a smaller focused group; it is loose group of businesses who didn't choose to come together, so they're not really an affiliation with their own drive and ambition; the role and responsibilities of the committee vis à vis the management group and paid workers were not clear from the beginning; and the scaffolding was not built from the ground up to ensure that the committee could take responsibility and ownership.

“ We didn't involve them much, and I think that was probably our fault as well, we just worked with the people who were engaging, some of them are part of the steering group, and they engaged back and forth, but we never gave them any responsibilities, to set up things or organise things.

Ann, July 2025

“ In community run SECs, the steering committee would do an awful lot more. They'd push it and drive it. Whereas in our case, the work was done by me and Ann, because we were resourced to do it. So, we went down and did it, we pulled together that loose affiliation of businesses.

Martin, July 2025



Lack of clarity on the role of the Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance (DPTA)

It was felt that the work of the DPTA and the T&H SEC was complimentary and that both organisations could work well together and support each other. The DPTA was invited to be a partner organisation and to join the steering group. The initial intention was that they could be the vehicle to communicate with the tourism network, but this didn't really pan out, mainly because it became more practical for Ann and Martin to work directly with the participating businesses. However, this meant that the role of the DPTA was never clarified.

Trying to meet expectations for the next phase

“ I think if you leave a gap between the ending of the first phase and the momentum that you built, you're regressing then, because you have to build up the momentum again to get people involved. But on the positive side of that, if you leave a bit of a gap, there might be more business owners coming into place, that will be more open to subscribe to the project.

Máire, July 2025

FACTORS SHAPING THE PACE OF SOLAR PV ADOPTION

Personality type

People's ability or willingness to change or take risks can depend on which of the following three categories they fall into: the early adopters who are eager and want to try; the fence sitters who need cajoling but can be brought on without evidence of success; the reluctant changers who need to see success, see the trend moving and see everybody else getting involved before they join in. The early adopters have been engaging in Phase 1 of this project.

Businesses are being pulled and dragged in many directions

Most are small, one person, two person businesses, where one person is probably doing five different functions at least, they're managing people, managing finance, managing stock control, customer relations, training and energy and all these things. Their time and energies are finite, and they have to make hard decisions about where to invest them.

Energy is invisible

People take energy for granted. Energy costs are not visible or immediate, unlike food, where you're putting in your orders every week. You'll see the price changes in food more clearly, whereas the electricity bill is a direct debit every three months.

Energy data is not seen as being valuable

It is not seen as being a key part of running the business, energy is just a thing that has to be paid for, a job that has to be done. There was a very, very low awareness within the sector of the amount of energy they were using and where it fitted into the bottom line of the business.

Inertia

People get used to the status quo and are reluctant to change. They are used to spending a certain percentage of their expenditure on energy and their energy systems work, so why do they need to change?

It's boring!

For many, it's not the most exciting thing in the world to be talking about energy or electricity bills.

Fear and embarrassment

A lot of people can't read their bills or are afraid to, and they're almost embarrassed by the fact that they can't. Their natural reaction is to go pull down the shutters. Some may feel that they want to have their bill under control before sharing it with anyone.

Lack of familiarity

Some of the business owners may not look at their energy bills, this may be left up to the accountant.

Uncertainty around when is the right time to move

Technologies change, and improve, so is it better to wait? There is a fear of investing in a technology that becomes obsolete, and you don't want to invest in something with a long payback if the technology changes in the meantime.

Uncertainty around what technology to go for

There is a gamble. When electricity prices rose recently, some people with air to water heat pumps and electric cars were shocked by the rise in their electricity bills. There are arguments for and against biomass, when is hydrogen coming in, and with solar, what if the weather isn't good, what if I need a lot of hot water in January? Businesses want to make sure they're on the right track.

Energy is not the highest priority

Businesses, especially in hospitality and services, are under a lot of financial pressure. The running costs of the businesses have been more immediately affected by the rise in food and employment costs and the difficulties in getting staff and accommodating them.

Aesthetics

Businesses may be worried about losing the charm and feel of their buildings, and the impact on the area if, for instance, they add insulation to the front or solar PV panels to the roof.

Ageing demographic

Tourism really took off on the Dingle peninsula in 1994 following substantial investments, which means many of the tourism business owners are coming to the end of their business careers and wondering if they should sell or not and if it is worth investing in a deep retrofit or new technologies, especially if it de-values the property by affecting the charm or aesthetics.

Inability or unwillingness to see what is coming down the tracks

Many people have the capacity to shut themselves down and only look at what's directly in front of them and not think about the future or the big picture.



THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE WEST KERRY DAIRY FARMERS SEC AND THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY SEC

The dairy farmers are all running farming businesses with similar buildings, energy systems and requirements. The tourism industry is very diverse, with seven or eight different kinds of business, each requiring energy in different ways and at different times.

The farmers' busy times are shorter and more concentrated (e.g. calving and silage cutting), so they are more available to focus on the project and the work involved. Whereas the tourism businesses are working flat out from April to September and during the winter they often go away on holidays, so it is more difficult to engage with them.

People are in farming for the love of farming, rather than the love of business, whereas tourism business owners run businesses based on cash flow, wages and monthly returns. So, they're looking at making a financial decision that's fairly clean cut.

The farmers were drawing off either Tams or SEAI grants. Tams was 60% funded but required an inspection from the Department. There was a fear that if it was found that, for example, their tanks weren't the right size from a slurry perspective, they could be shut down from a farming perspective. The grants for the tourism businesses were more clear-cut.

The roofs of the sheds were in poor condition on many of the farms and the electrical installations weren't great, so remedial work had to happen before installing solar PV. The tourism and hospitality buildings and fuse boards were in better nick.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER T&H BUSINESS FOCUSED PROJECTS

Learn from previous projects

In advance of a project starting, ensure that learnings and findings from previous groundbreaking projects be shared with the team, who may not have prior knowledge of what has gone on before.

Be clear about the governance of the project

Agree a decision making-structure, roles and responsibilities and channels of communication. Who is leading the project? How are decisions made? What is the role of the funders?

Get the most positive people to drive it

“ You don't want somebody in there telling you how you can't do this or why it's not going to work. You need people that are of a positive disposition, that can do this and are passionate about it, and everything else will happen after that. You need a mindset, and you need determination and people that are going to make it happen no matter what, because every time you ask for something, you're not going to get it, you might have to ask somebody else, so you have to be creative in how you approach it.

Declan, July 2025

Work with local people

“ You can't helicopter in the community leads, they have to emerge out because they've got a rooted ability to go in and talk to local people on a first name basis. It's about trust and people think you have a vested interest then as well. They think that if it's their own doorstep, they're not going to do me out of something, they're going to be more honest.

Jonathan, July 2025

Include a range of skills within your team and group

This kind of work requires knowledge, understanding, and skills around: climate change and sustainability; public engagement; project management and co-ordination; accessing funding; renewable energy, technology and engineering; the tourism and hospitality trade.

Put in place a dedicated resource to manage and co-ordinate the project

“ The fact that Deirdre, Ann and Martin have dedicated time for the project, makes a difference, because you do need to have that intensity of cover, availability and support. You can't just dip in and dip out of this. You're providing a constant, consistent support that people need. Tourism is such a busy industry, so there's always something else vying for your attention. But with somebody constantly contacting you and keeping in touch and coaxing you along, helping you and encouraging you, you will definitely stay on track. I think without that support system, it would be really very challenging to try and do this.

Declan, July 2025

Develop a clear plan of action at the beginning

“ Everybody needs to sit down including the funders and set out a clear agenda for the entire project of how far they're going to take it, for how much funding, and a timeframe for it. With expectations for the workers and then timely checks on those expectations.

Martin, May 2024

Produce a practical output

Try and focus on an output, a deliverable, and make sure that that output is practical and of benefit to your businesses.

You cannot set up a business-only SEC, as part of the SEAI SEC network

Setting up the West Kerry Dairy Farmers group and this tourism business group as SECs was sanctioned on a trial basis by SEAI. However, SEAI is now clear that they cannot support new business-led SECs, as their remit is to fund Energy Master Plans for communities. Therefore, if businesses want to avail of SEAI SEC mentor support and SEC grants to develop an EMP, they need to become part of a community-led SEC in their area. But experience from this T&H SEC is showing that, if businesses want to work together as a collective, they do not need to develop a full Energy Master Plan, they can leverage what has already been done in this project and then work on producing a roadmap of actions that are applicable to them.

“ Get the most benefit from your energy consultant. Leverage the data that's already been collected and use that, then focus on the areas that are different to build a tailored roadmap.

Deirdre, July 2025

Focus on audits and developing a roadmap

Bring in an energy and monitoring consultant at an early stage.

“ I would feel quite confident going out to any other place and saying, the first thing you need to do is get your energy audit done, the second thing is your staff training, and then it depends on your business. They don't need to do a full Energy Master Plan, they just all need to do their individual audits, which will inform the roadmap. Then the businesses could come together for buying power. Someone would need to lead the group like the Vintners, a tourism group or a Business Chamber.

Ann, July 2025

Produce a simplified version of your plan and roadmap

Ask the consultants to break it down in simplified terms and work with someone who can include good graphics.

Create a buzz locally

Do some pre-emptive work in the area to ensure that awareness is created about the project before it begins.

“ Highlight the excitement with this project, how beneficial it would be to the industry, how it will help to future proof the industry and the impact that might have.

Máire, July 2025

Target the willing first

At the beginning of the project, seek out and support the businesses who are willing and ready to activate.

“ Engage the willing and able in the first third, make the thing happen, and they'll be an exemplar for the second third, which will then engage and the last third are going to be a drag anyway, but if we got 60% of people doing something we'd be well on the way there. Perhaps at that point, it becomes a social norm to do it. With this approach, you start to strategize the handholding a little bit because you can't handhold everybody. It's too much work.

Martin, May 2024

Use energy surveys as a joining form

If energy surveys need to be filled out, don't sign people up as members until they have filled out the survey.

“ Engage with an initial phone call and say will you join up? Then you say there's going to be a process now in the next couple of days where I'm going to come to you with a questionnaire, either in person or online depending on their preference, and we're going to fill it out.

Martin, January 2024

Explain the technology in basic terms

When you are starting out don't assume people know very much.

“ Start off with the basics and explain the parts of the solar panel, from what goes on the ground or on the roof to what you have in the building.

Máire, July 2025

Have more open events and information meetings early on

“ Invite people along, bring them together and leave them air their issues and get more information. You might only get two people, three people, so have it informal.

Máire, July 2025

Get help if implementing a solar PV (or other) tender process

It is unrealistic for new groups to go through a procurement process and agree a collective price reduction without the involvement of a consultancy group or somebody familiar with the process. The engagement of a professional tendering company should be considered and resourced.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY**Recognise the need for this hyper-local work**

“ While there's great strategies and policies, the only way to deliver them is through the hyper local, so the system needs to get ready to provide the mechanisms.

Deirdre, July 2025

Get the system ready to take a level of risk on innovation projects

“ You don't have to open up the purse strings for it all to be risk, but you need funds designed in such a way that you can experiment, and I think they're moving in that direction with these deep demonstrator projects. We need more of that.

Deirdre, July 2025

“ Upskill the people who are evaluating these projects or designing the right mechanisms, asking the right questions. We need to get the system ready. We're inching closer, but we need to move faster than we traditionally move in policy.

Deirdre, July 2025

Provide core funding at local level to ensure the level of progress that is required to meet our national carbon emissions targets

Government needs to provide realistic funding to enable organisations like Dingle Hub to employ staff to continue their important driving, co-ordination, support and administrative role in the sustainability space at local level. Such funding needs to be more long-term and secure.

If this kind of work is to be rolled out nationally, new funding mechanisms have to be found that don't rely solely on state agencies. The budgets of state agencies are annualized, budget amounts change, and priorities can change, so they can't always deliver as much support as they'd like.

“ If this were to be replicated elsewhere, government needs to recognise the lead group that is specialist, dedicated and capable of driving a similar project in other communities. I don't think you can expect them to be run by the development cooperatives or any of those, because it's a very specialized area, and it's different to what they're doing, they all have their own remit. If you want success, you need to recognise what is needed with regard to resources and know-how. It's important to have the co-ordinator, because if you're depending on a voluntary committee, on a weekly meeting, it just won't happen.

Máire, July 2025

Develop a mechanism within state agencies to include supports for smaller businesses

SEAI should broaden the eligibility for their business audit grants so that businesses like the little restaurant and post office in the centre of the community can apply even if they don't spend over €10,000 on energy per annum. Similarly, Fáilte Ireland has budgets to work with the larger businesses on a one to one basis, but they can't work with smaller businesses.

Look at solutions for businesses and householders that are leasing buildings

How are people who are leasing business premises to transition when they don't own the property and for householders who are renting, who's going to pay for the solar?

“ We were lucky in Dingle town, where a lot of the businesses are owner owned. But if you go out to any other town, that's not the case.

Ann, July 2025

Expand the Local Link bus service on the peninsula

We definitely need a late night one from Dingle, around 10pm. At present the last one leaves at 7pm.

“ That would allow people to stay back west so better for the B&Bs, more affordable because you're not staying in an expensive hotel in Dingle, and it allows people to come into Dingle if they want to and then out again. At the moment, people feel they have to stay in Dingle town. It's better for the economy and you're encouraging slow tourism.

Ann, July 2025

Foster local pride

In September 2025, the Dingle Peninsula was honoured by the Irish Times as 'Ireland's Greenest Place.' While the efforts of the Sustainable Energy Communities (SECs) played a pivotal role, the recognition also reflected a wide spectrum of initiatives - from renewable energy installations and sustainable transport options to tree planting, biodiversity enhancements on farms, and zero-waste practices. Together, these actions foster a strong culture of sustainability and instil a sense of pride in collective efforts.

“ Build that pride factor into it and get kids involved. I know we teach our kids things, but often they can teach us as well.

Declan, July 2025

State sponsored agencies should hold their events in sustainable venues and provide sustainable food for attendees

“ We can't be saying to people 'you need to support sustainable and local', and then no one's doing it.

Ann, July 2025

Spread the good news, provide feedback on the existing supports

“ Why are we deploying solar in this country? Because there's a 25% grant for it. If there wasn't a 25% grant for it, what way does it play out? The payback is out at 12 years. So that's the key. Why are we doing heat pumps? Because there's support there for it.

Jonathan, July 2025

Provide feedback on why some of the other proposed opportunities don't have supports

“ There are other opportunities, heat recovery would be one. It's very hard to get a grant for it, but it's actually one of the best options. If you put kilowatt hour saving in any measure, heat recovery is there. It's such a low hanging fruit that's just there to be taken but there's no clear path on how somebody can get a few bob for it in a grant at the moment.

Jonathan, July 2025

SECTION 5 : The Experience of the Participating Businesses



MAHMOOD HUSSAIN

Inch Beach Cottages, B&B and Campsite

BACKGROUND

Mahmood and his mother Kitty first came to Inch in 1981 and rented land for farming. They then opened Sammy's in an existing lean-to shed in 1984 and went on to purchase and develop Sammy's Restaurant in 1987, and the campsite in 1991. The family added Inch Beach Cottages in 1998 (which now has nine cottages) and Inch Beach House B&B in 2002. Sammy's Restaurant was sold in 2019. Inch Beach Campsite was promoted more and became very active during the Covid pandemic. Mahmood, his wife, Iris and their three children, Mark, George and Zarah are all involved in running the businesses.

“ I would have lots of people from Kerry, but I would have people from everywhere, France, Germany, Switzerland, America. I have two Germans there tonight in a tent, we're open all year round, which is a great facility for people because most places are closed. It's not all about Mahmood and making money. I have no interest in money. For me the challenge is doing things and doing them right. I love the challenge.
(February 2024)

REASONS FOR JOINING T&H SEC

Mahmood is very aware of the challenge of climate change and the need for us all to cut our greenhouse emissions. He wants to make his business as sustainable as possible and sees that this is what the tourists are now looking for.

- “ The tourists look for it now. It's a coming thing.
(February 2024)
- “ If people are given the incentive to market under the green banner that will give them the push to do more, so it's a good strategy. In a way it does two things, it's a marketing strategy, plus the fact it's giving you the impetus to do more, to tick those boxes.
(February 2024)

CLIMATE CHANGE CONCERNS

Mahmood has always had an interest in world affairs and watching world news and he understands climate change, but being part of the SEC has made him even more aware.

- “ I feel strongly about climate change, not over strongly about it, but I'm one person, I do what I can, and I'm aware of it. I suppose living by the sea, I have an outdoor business and an indoor business, I'm very conscious of the weather and climate change and what's happening. (February 2024)
- “ I know that last storm this winter, I was watching it, there were very strong gusts. Fortunately, I've been okay, I haven't had any real damage. We have houses which are block built, so they have stood the test of time with storms and things. So, we seem to be okay, but with storms you never know. (June 2025)
- “ I love the fine weather on sunny days, so I'm one of those people. If I was a farmer and some other type of business, I might have a different viewpoint. I find that I would have a number of people coming in from Europe, and they'd be saying how nice it is that it's that bit cooler, that it's not as warm as Central Europe and even France, Spain and England. (June 2025)
- “ You think about all that's going on in the world and you're scratching your head about what makes sense, and here we are trying to do small things. We know air flight has big environmental impact, it's bound to have because of the fuel they're burning but look at the bombing and warfare that's going on all over the world, not only the two big ones, but it's going on all over the place. That's not helping the climate or the environment. (February 2024)

IMPACT OF T&H SEC

Prior to joining the SEC, Mahmood had already made some changes, primarily to cut costs, but also because of the environmental aspect and overall comfort benefits. He re-insulated the holiday cottages in 2012 and in 2021 replaced the storage heaters with heat pumps.

- “ When I make money, I spend money on the properties. All our nine properties now have heat pumps. We did that when we had the money. (February 2024)

Mahmood was asked to sit on the T&H SEC steering group, and he participated in the solar PV tender process.

- “ They asked me to come on board, and I was interested, and I wanted to see what they were doing and if I could be any help to them. (February 2024)

DCSix did an audit on the campsite and on the B&B building.

The SEC motivated Mahmood to go solar. However in the end he did not opt for the group scheme but chose another solar PV provider instead.

- “ It made us more aware of our energy costs and the carbon footprint. So that spurred me on to put my solar panels on all of my houses, I had only one house done previously, so then I did eight more. (June 2025)
- “ And I've done a big job on our B&B as well. I put solar panels on that. So, we're producing 100 kilowatts now, we have that many solar panels up. (June 2025)

For Mahmood the next phase is electric vehicles, and he is thinking about the car he wants to drive.

- “ It's given me the spur on to do the next thing and look at electric vehicles, or try one to test the water, see how it would work for me. I'm trying to look at it, but I got caught at the end of last year. My car broke down. I said to my son, go away and get me something. He got me a diesel car, but when I had time to think after the winter, I wouldn't have bought that. I would have bought a hybrid or something like that, it's just I got caught at the wrong time, and I was forced to do something. (June 2025)

He is also wondering about providing electric car chargers in the holiday village.

- “ I have no electric charging points yet in my properties. It's because I have so many properties and they're not that close, and you're saying, where am I putting my charging points? And you hear talk and you see people's vehicles, and you're saying, will they actually use them? I've had Americans come in with hybrids, they never ask you have you a charging point. The investment isn't huge but it's just the monitoring of it to charge people, and space, because it's a dedicated space. (June 2025)

Mahmood has applied to be part of the EasyGo car charging trial. He is also looking at other actions he can take.

- “ We're looking at the refuse and things that we use in the hospitality business, like the sprays, etc. (February 2024)
- “ It's great knowing that your solar panels are providing your electricity. We have something here which we mightn't plug in as quickly, but I'm saying, plug it in now, because it's costing nothing. I'm saying, what gas appliance can we get rid of now to convert to electric? But there's only so much you can do. We have electric washing machines. I have a gas dryer, and I suppose overall maybe the gas dryer is okay. We have a gas cooker in our kitchen and a gas grill for doing the rashers but they don't have big gas usage. (June 2025)

Inch Beach House and Inch Beach Holiday Homes were shortlisted as a successful finalist for the 2025 SEAI Energy Awards in the Small Business category.

WHAT WORKED

Working together as a group

- “ You have the group there, and they're motivating you and maybe picking your brain a bit. (June 2025)
- “ When the wider community sees us doing it, they may want to have their input into it, they may see this as something positive. And if businesses are going to the trouble of it, because it's not always about saving money, it can cost you money in ways too, but you're doing something positive for the environment. Everybody will want to come on the bandwagon then and be part of this. (February 2024)

Having Ann and Martin

- “ I can ring Ann in the morning and ask her questions, she'll have an answer for me, and she'll put me in touch with DCSix, and anything about grant aid or any funding. So that's really marvellous, plus the fact that we are coming together as a group for buying power. (February 2024)
- “ It's great to have a group and someone like Ann and Martin there, they're looking at things, and they're coming up with these ideas. Because as a one-off person, you don't have the time to do these things, and you don't know where to go searching. Time is money and that's it. (June 2025)

Funding

- “ I would like to see them continue with funding so they could keep the group going together. I'd be afraid that if the funding stops the group would disintegrate. Maybe not all together quickly, but because everyone's busy, and business is getting harder and harder. (February 2024)

CHALLENGES

Time

- “ For me, it's just getting there to meet them and sit down and have the time. We're all trying to run our own business things, and we're trying to go to the group for the meetings. (February 2024)
- “ I work hard on my business, which fluctuates. You're mental busy in the summertime and then come the winter I'm going to go away and have a holiday, have a break. I don't want to hear about things and often something's on when you are planning something or you are away, so it's hard to fit everything in, especially as you're getting older. (June 2025)

Distance from Dingle town

- “ I'm in Inch and they're in Dingle, I'm that bit far away, I'm a bit isolated. But Ann is great. She rings me and tells me what's going on and what's happening, and she keeps me updated.

The pace of change

- “ When you consider our location and the spread of the whole Dingle Peninsula, you could only achieve so much so fast, it's a slow burner. It takes time, and the rate the temperature is rising globally is not at a slow pace. (June 2025)

LOOKING AHEAD

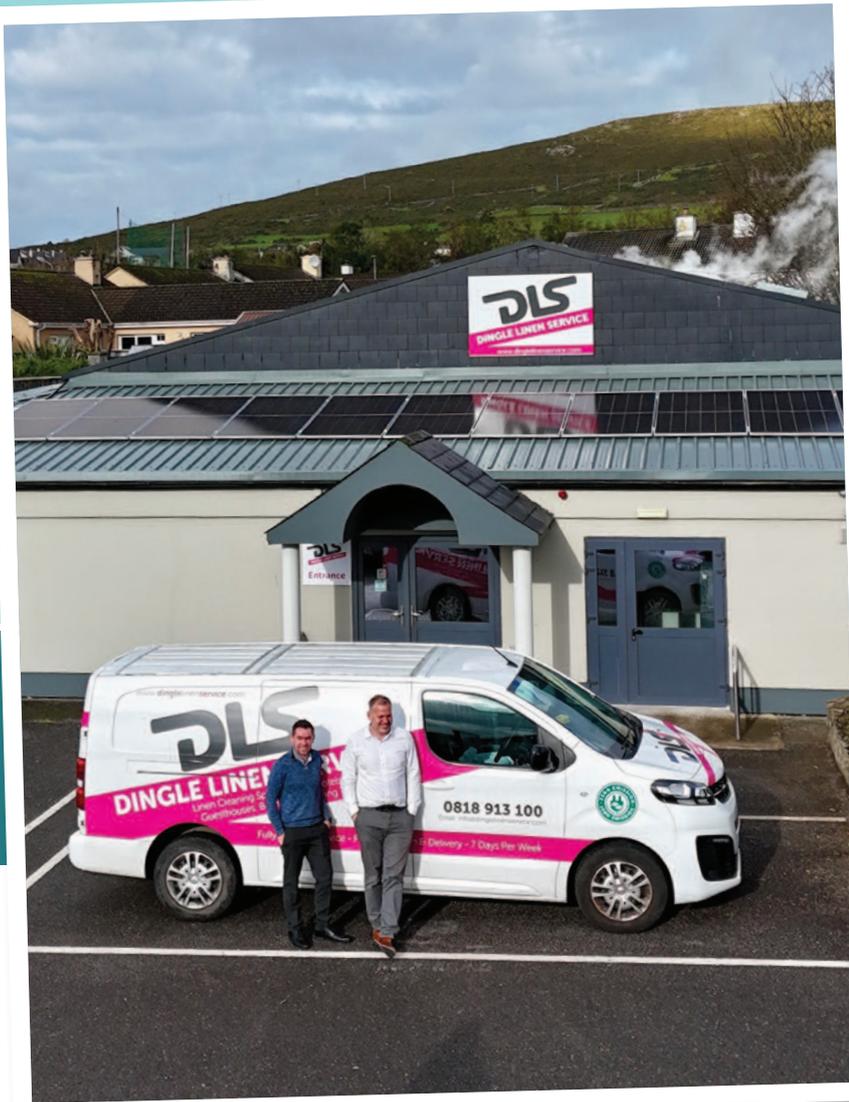
Mahmood would like the SEC to keep going to create a green image for the Dingle Peninsula and to be an example for other areas to follow.

- “ It would be marvellous to have it all Ireland, but I think that's maybe a step too far, but if Fáilte Ireland could pilot places like the Dingle Peninsula and a few other places around Ireland. (February 2024)
- “ There is a need for it and there's the want for it. I think there's a market out there and that market will be growing. Sustainable travelling and holidaying is more of a thing. (February 2024)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

More reliable EV charging

- “ Charging points for cars, that's a big issue, the number of them. But having said that, the car's battery is getting better, you could be looking at a four to five hundred kilometer run on your car, but I'd say the big issue is if you're up and down to Dublin, things like that. I hear some funny reports about people saying they pulled into Barack Obama Plaza and they weren't working, and there was a queue at the other one. So, I could see that being an issue, and they'd want to look at it and come around to it a bit more. (June 2025)



DANIEL McCARTHY

**Dingle Linen Service,
Spa Road, Dingle**

BACKGROUND

Dingle Linen Service was established in 2016 to service the bedrooms of five accommodation properties, owned by its parent company, Dingle Hospitality Ltd. In 2023, because of outside demand and a desire to scale up, the company converted the former Hillgrove nightclub into a laundry, and the business took off. They now have two vans and a truck on the road delivering and collecting white linen from guesthouses and hotels, including the Dingle Skellig, Benzers, Killarney Park, Glenbeigh and Jack's in Cromane. Daniel is the group operations manager. He's 34 and the owner of the company is ten years older.

“ We're young, we're in it for the long haul.
(February 2024)

Daniel is also involved in the pub trade, and he owns McCarthy's Bar in Dingle. ESB Networks carried out an energy audit on the premises as part of their ESB Networks Dingle Project (2018-2021). Daniel also drove an electric car for two months as part of their EV trial in 2021.

REASONS FOR JOINING T&H SEC

The business is ready and willing to adapt but they need help.

“ I did hotel management in college. My brother is a structural engineer, and he does a bit of electrical engineering. So, I'm constantly ringing him, but I need experts to tell me what the right thing to do is.
(February 2024)

“ In our laundry, now we're nowhere near there yet, but I want to be in a position to get those little cards, to give them to all our customers, so they can put them in the bedroom saying our laundry is nearly self-sufficient. I want to get there. And then I'll be so proud doing that, but that's a long way away.
(February 2024)

CLIMATE CHANGE CONCERNS

“ I feel really strongly about climate change, so does everyone in the company. And it's just trying to figure out what's the best fit for us. We know where we want to be. We know what the destination is, but we need help to figure out how to get to our destination.
(February 2024)

“ I saw the EPA had a study done about climate change and the amount of people for whom it's nearly a day-to-day worry. And you know, it's happening really fast. I graduated in college in 2011, and we did not talk about sustainability once. Honestly, I went through books, it's not in one book, it's in nothing. So, this is all new and we need to act fast. We need to act really fast.
(February 2024)

Climate change will have a massive impact.

“ I believe that we're going to see more and more effects and climate change in the next 15 years, it's going to become more and more evident, and people are going to start, because at the moment it's kind of nearly a buzzword, and people are saying, oh, you know, climate change, and all the rest of it, but it will actually be oh, my god, this is happening. And so, it's up to us then to do our part for the goodness of everyone but also to be in a position to say we're a sustainable service, you should stay with us.
(February 2024)

IMPACT OF T&H SEC

The company is starting from a good place because they have the most up-to-date machinery.

“ We're probably one of the most efficient laundries in Ireland, just because we're new.
(February 2024)

They were not ready to install solar PV in the first T&H SEC meitheal, but they joined the second round and in June 2025 Solar Beo installed a 50.6 kW system.

“ The solar panels only went in a couple of weeks ago. We had to do up a bit of the roof before they went in. So we've done that, and they're working. It's great. We're absolutely delighted, very, very happy. I think we have avoided about 18 tons of CO2 this year, just astronomical, and the system will be paid back in no time at all.
(June 2025)

*I think it's because we're an ideal business. We start at six in the morning, which isn't ideal but we have to, and we finish about four in the afternoon, so we're not getting anything between six and nine, but the rest of it, it's all peak. It's perfect. We're feeding back to the grid then between 5, 6 and 7 o'clock in the evening. It couldn't be a better business to put solar into, no batteries required.
(June 2025)*

LED lighting and sensors have also been installed on the premises.

The company has a fleet of three vehicles, a large truck and two vans. They bought an electric van this year (ahead of expectations), installed two electric chargers and will probably change the second van at the end of the year or the start of 2026. But it's not feasible to change the truck to an electric version yet, that will happen in the next three or four years when the technology improves.

Daniel bought himself a hybrid car. He didn't go fully electric because of the day trips he needs to take to and from Dublin.

“ At least I went hybrid. I'm half-way there. I have that range anxiety thing. Now the hybrid, the battery isn't massive, but it does the job for the moment. I will go fully electric, but I think the charging infrastructure around the country has to get a bit better. Sometimes it's not a good idea to change too fast and go full head in.
(June 2025)

The Laundry is probably one of the biggest energy users in the SEC. LPG gas heats the hot water to 80 degrees and electricity runs the machines. Over the past year, DCSix has been working with them to try and find a good way of capturing the heat from the water coming out of the machines (which is around 35 degrees) and transferring it through copper wires to heat the water going in (to 20 degrees).

“ I definitely have a lot of confidence now. So, we will experiment more.
(June 2025)

“ In the last six months, we've bought an electric van, put in solar and put in two charging points as well. There will be no stopping us now.
(June 2025)

“ People are asking us more, how are you getting on sustainability wise? They're always delighted when we tell them what we've done and what we're doing. People want to be seen to be dealing with businesses who are sustainable.
(June 2025)

Daniel has plans to make a promotional video on the sustainability of the laundry, telling the story and explaining the different technologies they have introduced.

WHAT WORKED

The expertise and advice

“ That's what we need. We know the destination, we just need to know how to get there.
(February 2024)

Having Ann and Martin

“ If Ann hadn't got on to me first day. I don't know if I would be as proactive to be honest with you. Now she came at a good time because we were upgrading. It was just around the time we were moving when she started ringing me. She rang me I'd say 15 times, and she kept on at me, which is great because I needed that at the time. It definitely kept me on the ball with it.
(February 2024)

“ And if that didn't happen, I'd be nowhere near to having the investigations done that I have. I need someone to hold my hand and bring it forward.
(February 2024)

“ I already knew both Ann and Martin, so there is trust there, which is great.
(February 2024)

Group discount

“ We got a big discount with our solar because we were part of it. So, we're delighted with that.
(June 2025)

The excellent solar PV grant

“ The standard commercial grant for solar PV was 1,800 three years ago, now my grant is 12,720. That's mad stuff. So, if someone's going to complain about that, then the government can do no more.
(June 2025)

The following is a financial breakdown for the Dingle Laundry solar PV system:

Purchase price:	€31,000
SEAI grant:	€12,720
Business investment:	€18,581

“ Now it's still a significant investment, but a no-brainer if there ever was one.
(June 2025)

“ I'm a bit of a geek, so I love talking about the numbers and the solar panels and showing people the app. It's great and it shows you the savings. The solar panels got installed on the last good day in May, but we've saved €1,158 in the 24 days gone so far. I love showing people that and it's no secret, it's saving us a lot.
(June 2025)

Peer-assisted learning

“ I'm constantly talking to other businesses, about all that kind of stuff. So, I think that's the way forward.
(February 2024)

The site visits were hugely important

Knowledge and confidence building

If the company hadn't been involved in the SEC, Daniel thinks they might not have spent any more than six thousand euro on solar PV because they didn't know much about it and wouldn't have had the confidence to make more of an investment.

“ But I went in with zero worries, no worries at all. My boss was saying, jeez, are you sure? 19,000 is a lot. And I was, no, don't worry about it. I've been on this for months at this stage and I'm involved in this SEC, everything will be fine. And it is, it's stacking up.
(June 2025)

“ It gave me confidence, I hadn't a clue, I actually knew nothing. I didn't know what kilowatts were, I didn't know anything. I'd have a good enough grasp of it now, like we're saving about 40% of our energy bill. I think we're going to save about eight grand a year, so we will pay it back in three years or so.
(June 2025)

Local connections

It was good that Solar Beo are from the area and well known locally and that Barry from DCSix is also local.

CHALLENGES

Lint in drying process

Daniel now knows that heat transfer (from outgoing hot water to incoming cold water in washing machines) will work and he and DCSix are working on this, but there is still a massive question mark over heat recovery from the driers, largely because of the amount of lint that comes off the towels in the drying process. Lint is very flammable, and insurance companies won't allow it near heat pumps because of the huge risk of fire. So, they are looking at other possibilities.

LOOKING AHEAD

Be a champion for the cause

“ The more Ambassadors we have, the better. What I'd love to do is do all my works and be brought up to some town up in Galway or something like that and let them hear my story. I know that this is going to work out for me, because I'm not going to do anything that's not going to work out. I'm very careful about what I do. And I'd love to be able to go up and convince them that this is the way forward. (February 2024)

The SEC will get more buy-in

“ I think, if anything, there's going to be people regretting that they didn't join it from the start. I suppose it's a lot to ask the whole community to come together, but I think it will happen, I really do. (June 2025)

Pop-up advice clinic in Dingle town

“ It would have to be in town, somewhere where there's parking close by, maybe an hour a week, say, every Wednesday at 11 there's someone in this place, and they can give you advice. Or even once a month. I think it'd be great, especially for elderly people. And if the SEAI could be there with the SEC too. (June 2025)

Ask SEAI to attend SEC workshops and events, and to be there for both domestic and commercial upgrades.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIMILAR PROJECTS

- Be careful when choosing the solar PV company, be sure they are reputable and will look after your roof.
- Go to other places and see the technology in use.
- Look at the app, if the person would show you, so you have an idea of how it works.

FOR POLICY MAKERS

Funding

“ I think Fáilte Ireland have a responsibility to fund things like this. They know a lot about sustainability, and they have an ethical responsibility to make sure that Ireland is doing its part in trying to help stop climate change or slow it down anyway. I suppose Kerry Co Council does as well, and probably Údaras, but I think it falls right on Fáilte Ireland. (February 2024)

The town needs better infrastructure

“ If we're going to be marketing ourselves as a sustainable destination, we need infrastructure. We've got two chargers, they're taken up all the time, they're opposite Ocean World. We need them dotted around the town. If we're going to be a sustainable destination, then we have to have big infrastructure. (February 2024)





LASSE MULCAHY

**Louis Mulcahy Pottery,
Cloichear,
Baile an Fheirtéaraigh**

BACKGROUND

Lasse is the son of Louis and the late Lisbeth Mulcahy. In 1975, the family left Dublin and set up a pottery studio and workshop on the Dingle Peninsula. In 2004 Louis became the first Irish craftsman to receive an honorary degree from the National University of Ireland in recognition of his artistry and the prosperity it brought to his local community. The pottery now employs 20-22 full-time workers who break their hours up across the week, depending on what suits them. All live within the local area, the longest commute is from Dingle town. Lasse grew up in the pottery and over time has taken a key role in the running of the business. He is now General Manager and Managing Director and much of his work is in administration and policy direction. A key focus is now on sustainability.

The business participated in the CE4RT (Circular Economy for Regenerative Tourism) programme, led by MTU in partnership with Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance, which ran from January 2023 until January 2025. <https://ce4rt.euproject.site/>

REASONS FOR JOINING T&H SEC

The company wants to operate in a way that is as close to carbon neutral or zero as possible. A few years ago, an energy audit was carried out and Lasse thought they would also receive help to implement the required changes. However, this did not happen.

“ *The audit was fine, but we don't have the internal resources for making sure we're putting the right things in, so we were hoping that the people who'd done the audit would drive the changes. I don't know, was our project too small for them, or were we too remote? It just seemed to fizzle out.* (March 2024)

So, that's where the SEC came in, helping them to get the information and the supports that they needed.

“ *The ethos of the workshop and the business has always been to try and do the right thing by the community and by the environment. If there are things that we can do to lessen the impact, then it's up to us to do that.* (March 2024)

“ *I joined without knowing fully what the overall intention was, other than that it is in an area that we're interested in, and if there's going to be changes, we'd like to be part of that, and if we can be part of the push to make it better.* (March 2024)

Lasse feels that energy independence and security are important and that the SEC is about the community taking action and trying to come up with solutions.

“ I think there's a need for energy security and independence. If we can get a community working together, we might be able to push the boundaries a bit more and have shared storage, shared generating, and if the network is collapsing elsewhere that we'd be able to keep going in some way. I think it's a good bit down the road, but this will be a start. (March 2024)

CLIMATE CHANGE CONCERNS

“ I don't like it. It makes me a little uneasy, the uncertainty of it, how do you stop it and how do you make the changes? So, the only way you can feel a bit better about it is to try and have whatever small influence we can, for everybody to do their own thing and small changes will hopefully grow. I sometimes hear people saying, well, we're so small as a country or as a community, or it's not us but everybody else. But everybody has to start with their own and then if everybody starts doing that, it will follow. (March 2024)

“ We're already experiencing more frequent and longer power outages over the last couple of years. I think we're lucky where we are, we might be hit by more storms and things, but we're not a very low-lying country. We're not going to get the extreme heat of other places maybe, but there'll be other challenges. (June 2025)

“ I think that energy and fuel and food security will become more and more important. We saw it with COVID, supply chains and globalization are going to come under pressure. So, I think different regions are going to have to look after themselves, and they may stop growing and producing to supply other economies. I think the world needs to change and have more diversity locally and look at essential goods and food and things being sourced more locally. (June 2025)

“ I find it disappointing to hear, or to see the people who still think that there is, the phrase used I think is, democratization of travel, and that it's everybody's right to just travel regardless. I think it takes away from people's right to also be concerned about the damage being done, the need to make change and the influence of the bigger multinationals, these big businesses that are so big that it's spreadsheets they're based on, and they're a bit disconnected from the reality of what's happening. (March 2024)

IMPACT OF T&H SEC

Lasse is part of the SEC Steering group and was very involved in the solar PV tendering process.

“ That was a very interesting process, and it was interesting to be involved and see where other people were coming from and the expertise they had and the questions they were putting. (March 2024)

The premises was monitored by DCSix as part of the data gathering process for the SEC Energy Master Plan.

The company installed solar PV as part of the first SEC meeting and will probably install batteries when the time is right, which would allow them to have enough power to continue in smaller blackouts.

“ We put 30kW in. We had been looking at 50. We have kilns that would use 80kW at a time, but that's only once a week, so it wouldn't be viable. 30, it turns out, is a good amount for us. On the sunny days, we're generating 25 and we might only be using five to eight at the time, so there's a lot going back into the grid. If we were storing that, we could even it out, because we have a number of things that go through the night and it will cover those. (June 2025)

“ We've no batteries yet. They're advising us to wait, that there will be supports coming in, that they're not cost effective at the moment, and we're not cash rich. (June 2025)

Lasse is also interested in participating in the EasyGo car charging trial, as this would use up some of their solar energy generated during the day. The business is currently re-doing their website, and the updated version will highlight how they are involved in the SEC and the sustainable changes they have made.

WHAT WORKED

The tendering process and outcome

The experience of the West Kerry Farmers SEC sped up the process and then getting together as a group was helpful to go through the issues and to share people's different experiences and needs. This led to a good contract and a good solution. The technical specifications and after service were scrutinized, which gave the businesses more confidence to sign up.

“ It was interesting to know that there are problems with the follow up with a lot of the solar installations. Solar is going in very fast, but issues arise with the maintenance and the warranty follow up. So, having the SEC, we were able to address them with the provider, and they've made commitments, we wouldn't have done that alone. (June 2025)

Technical help

“ Before we were part of this, we wanted to put in the maximum amount of solar. We were getting various prices, and the costs were going up and down depending on whether we're putting in batteries, and we couldn't get clarity on it. So, through the SEC, they've measured our usage more specifically, when, time of day, rather than just a general annual consumption. So, we'll put in a smaller number of solar panels, it's more affordable. (March 2024)

“ We did want to put a battery in. Being part of the SEC, we understand that there will probably be grants and supports and changes in technology coming over the next few years, so we'll try and put those in later. (March 2024)

Gaining technical knowledge and understanding

“ I found DCSix to be very good. They came in, they put the monitoring on, they helped with the tender process and the rating, they gave the technical explanation for different things, so it made it a lot easier to understand the process. And in fairness to them, where there have been questions or things they didn't know about, they've said that and gone off and found out. (March 2024)

Network of people working together

Having worked together on this, people now have a better understanding of the issues and so it should be easier to work together on other things. Also there is a now a network of interested members to tap into.

“ So, Ann is able to send out a request for the EasyGo charging trial and say, look, that's there, are you aware of it? (June 2025)

A forum for ideas and discussion

“ Having a place to keep being able to say, listen, I think we need to go in this direction. (June 2025)

Involvement in the SEC demonstrates sustainable action

“ The other benefit of the SEC is that we have done it. We're re-doing our website, and we will say we have participated in this scheme. We've been part of it, we have the solar panels up, we will continue to work and go on this journey. So, it gives people confidence that they're dealing with businesses in a community that is actively working to be more sustainable and not just saying it. (June 2025)

CHALLENGES

Previous involvement in battery trial

In 2018/19, Lasse took part in a home battery trial led by ESB Networks on the Dingle Peninsula as part of the Storenet project StoreNet Innovation Project Close-Out Report. But the battery broke down after the trial and the Sonnen company refused to fix it.

“ That's where we're hearing the challenges are, it's easy to get people to quote, put the systems in, but the maintenance and the warranties haven't caught up yet. (March 2024)

Scope of the SEC

“ I was probably thinking that there's a bigger, broader thing that needs to be done in general, whereas the focus of this was measuring all the energy usage, and on solar. And that was always going to be the case with solar. That was all perfect. Having the other things as a part of it would have just confused it anyway. But maybe there's an opportunity to look into other things as a group. (June 2025)

Grid restrictions

“ What I wouldn't have been aware of is that the ESB were going to restrict the upload amounts onto the grid. But we can see we need more than the amount they were saying could go up. Now, maybe I'm not understanding that restriction, and maybe it's an average over the year, so we'll find that it's okay, but we'll see. (June 2025)

LOOKING AHEAD

Funding and supports for the SEC need to continue

“ I would see it stopping if the funding stops because it is Ann and Martin who are doing the communication, they're the point of contact and if there isn't funding for them, they won't be there. Then I don't see it continuing. There's so many different things you get involved in and the key is having an office funded where there are people there who can, I see it with the Dingle Tourism Alliance as well, it's hard to keep enough people coming and then you really need the backup of a team in an office who can field the calls. (March 2024)

Focus on energy independence and energy security and seeing if there's some way of sharing energy locally

Lasse has learnt through the SEC that providing ways of storing and sharing energy on the peninsula is not as straightforward as initially thought, but he still thinks it's the way forward and the direction the peninsula needs to be going.

“ I do think if there are central areas where there is a bit of backup power and storage, at least water and different things can be made available to people in the community if there's a shortage and it's taking longer to get power back. (June 2025)

“ The follow on from this would be looking at complimentary or other sustainable sources to back up the solar because the solar is only there in the key hours. It's fantastic, but on the duller days it isn't generating as much. In the winter it won't generate as much. And we have a lot of wind on the peninsula, and I think there are opportunities for maybe hydro or whatever, just to back up whatever solar is there. (June 2025)

“ Now that's bigger picture thinking, a small SEC mightn't be able to do it, but to advocate for that might be something. (June 2025)

Focus on sourcing and growing diverse foods in a more local way, and building on other local projects, community gardens, etc.

“ We've changed our diets to foods that have to be brought halfway across the world. That's great, but maybe there needs to be a bit more of the local and what we can produce as well. And we probably need to work on developing our own grape here, so that we can have a continued supply of wine when things go wrong. (June 2025)

Look at other ways of replacing fossil fuels

“ We would use gas in our kilns at the moment. Relative to other businesses we'd be low usage, but it's still usage that we'd like to move from. And so there has been talk of biodigesters, but it depends on how they're implemented. They're not always as sustainable as they sound. So that or sustainable oils, I know that vegetable oils are available as an HVO that are a direct substitution for diesel. We could fire our kilns with that. But there isn't clarity where the HVO is coming from, and whether it's impacting communities and food production and, also, it's coming from across the world. I'd like if we could switch to a local sustainable source. (June 2025)

Work towards regenerative tourism

“ Our own belief is that slowing down, and less volume tourism into the area would be more sustainable going forward for everyone, for the community, for the visitor and for the environment. (March 2024)

“ If you're coming, come and stay for longer, or if you're coming, stay in one place for a bit longer. Be with us for one visit, go somewhere else for the next, or split it in two but don't drive every day. (March 2024)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIMILAR PROJECTS

- You have to bring people in when they're ready.

“ I think there was a good group and a good pick up on this. I think it initially might have been slower than they expected or had hoped. But I suppose once you start seeing it going into places, and people are seeing the benefits then others will follow. (June 2025)

- Become informed and learn from the experiences of others, talk to Ann and Martin and the WKDF SEC, and other projects around the country.
- Do the research to check that the installation is going to be as good as it needs to be, and you get the highest quality product.
- Be sure to get the best price possible.
- Be sure to get agreement for aftercare support and clarity around warranties.

FOR POLICY MAKERS

Support the development of local resilience

We need to make sure that we're not dependent on supply chains for critical items, like food and energy, that are far away. We need to start looking at our own ability to produce locally.

“ It's important to start testing that ability and having those skills so that when there are worldwide shortages we can produce some of those things locally in our own country. (June 2025)



JAMIE Ó FLANNÚRA

Dingle Sea Safari, The Pier Strand Road, Dingle

BACKGROUND

Jamie is the Marketing and Sales Manager for Dingle Sea Safari, a family run tourism-based boat tour company working out of Dingle Harbour. Jamie's father, Jimmy, used to work as a fisherman on bigger trawlers until the late-1980's, when he and Jamie's mother, Bridget set up a business offering boat trips to see Fungie the dolphin in Dingle Bay. Eight years ago, the company began to offer two and a half hour trips where passengers get to see the scenery, the wildlife, the caves, and to hear about the history and geology of the Dingle Peninsula. The company is based in rented premises in the Marine Building on Dingle pier, and currently has five ribs on the water, each with a capacity for 12 people. On average they carry about 150 people per day during the tourist season. The rib experience has been rated as the number one activity on the peninsula.

Jamie is very active locally. All of the different projects he is involved in have a focus on how to collectively make the little changes that will make a big difference. He is on the Fáilte Ireland local tourism development plan committee and is also on the committee of the Dingle Food Festival (which aims to become the first Waste Free Festival in Ireland) where he helps with marketing and messaging on social media.

The business participated in the Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme which helped them look at how best to reduce emissions. They were also involved in the CE4RT (Circular Economy for Regenerative Tourism) programme, led by MTU in

partnership with Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance, which ran from January 2023 until January 2025. <https://ce4rt.eu/project.site/> As part of this, they were given a coach to help them put together a sustainability policy and work towards getting a sustainability certification.

“As a country, and especially in the tourism industry, and in my own life, we're far more conscious of it. It's just nearly a requirement that there has to be environmentally friendly aspects of every business. It's just taken for granted, which wasn't there five years ago. Everybody is nearly expecting it. (June 2025)

REASONS FOR JOINING T&H SEC

The business wants to be involved in as many different projects as possible, to participate in the training and learning opportunities, and to work with other businesses and ideas, because it is hard to do this in isolation.

CLIMATE CHANGE CONCERNS

“Climate change is a real worry. It's something that I think my generation is really conscious and worried about, because there's elements that are outside of our control. But then, if everybody thought about that, sure nothing would ever be done. (May 2024)

“ It's something that, being part of a business that operates in the tourism industry, we always have to be mindful of, I don't want to say the type of damage we're doing, but how we're affecting our overall area and the world we're living in, while offering a tourism experience.
(May 2024)

“ I try and make as many changes or work on as many elements of it in the different things that I do in my daily life, from everything that I'm part of, and if it can have a collective overall result.
(May 2024)

Rising sea temperatures have affected the type of wildlife Dingle Sea Safari sees at different times of the year and they need to communicate this honestly to the tourists who expect certain wildlife to be there and to answer their questions without worrying them.

The business is very directly affected by the weather challenges, which are getting worse, especially strong winds and heavy seas. They have to cancel bookings as they don't want people to go out and have a bad experience.

“ We want people to feel disappointed because they didn't get out, rather than disappointed that they did go out in bad sea conditions.
(May 2024)

“ For us the increasing temperatures in the water are impacting the sea animals that we're seeing, impacting the trends in the seasons. Our operation times for the last couple of years have been a lot more challenging and difficult because of sea conditions and wind, and then when you do get out into the elements now, we don't guarantee what you will see.
(June 2025)

Within the business, and when communicating with tourists, Jamie promotes sustainability, and the changes that need to be made from a climate change point of view.

“ If we can build on that together as a community, it will make a difference. We're focusing on how, as a business and as a peninsula, we can work together to protect what we have.
(May 2024)

IMPACT OF T&H SEC

“ I think, overall, the SEC definitely has impacted us as part of the community, to know this is happening on the peninsula. It's so great, there's so many businesses involved in it. We're a small town that is obviously so well known all over the country. To have that community aspect is really unique.
(June 2025)

The business has massively reduced the amount of carbon they emit per passenger over the last five years, largely because the tour boats are now full every day. Also, they have purchased two new boats in the last two years, which are far more environmentally friendly, in relation to the type of engine, the amount of diesel or petrol used, and the maintenance required, so they are not having as much of a negative impact as the older boats had. But the big challenge around their use of fossil fuel use remains.

“ We can see that the impact we're having is the type of fuel we're using, petrol and diesel. So, it's to look at the alternatives. We're at capacity nearly now so we know how many passengers we carry every year. We know how many people are coming to the peninsula to do the experience, so it should be a focus going forward. We know for the year, averaging what we used over the last two years, it's going to be the same every year, roughly, because the captains have a two-and-a-half-hour tour, it's the same tour they do. The trends are all there.
(June 2025)

While he can see the difference that the SEC is having on the peninsula for specific types of businesses, Dingle Sea Safari hasn't got much out of it because of the type of business they are. Also, unfortunately they can't install solar PV because they don't own the premises they use on the pier.

“ I can see that it is making a bigger difference in some businesses because it has been more applicable to them because of the types of grants that are available, or the types of opportunities that are there.
(June 2025)

Jamie is on the road a lot with work, so to lessen the impact he now drives a hybrid car.

WHAT WORKED

Co-ordination and drive

“ It's really crucial, having people on the ground that you can get on to, and bounce ideas off. We're all on this very early journey, but as a peninsula, if we can all keep people interested by having, say, a meet-up every two months. You could learn more off other people on the peninsula, if that's facilitated, than you would from anything else.
(May 2024)

“ It was so clear, there was great communication, there was great follow-up, it was very personal, everything that was done by the team was brilliant.
(June 2025)

“ That's what's going to keep people interested, because everybody is so busy in the businesses.
(May 2024)

Working together

- “ It has been a fantastic way of getting people to realise and open their eyes to what difference they could make if everybody comes together collectively.
(June 2025)

The meetups with the other businesses on the peninsula

This has been fantastic for networking.

CHALLENGES

Jamie was hoping that the T&H SEC would be able to help them source alternative fuel for the boats. It's not possible to store biodiesel on the peninsula at the moment. The nearest company supplying it is about two and half hours' drive away and there isn't enough demand to store it on the peninsula (you need to store a full tank). There are ongoing conversations on how to address this, but as yet no clear solutions have been found.

- “ I just felt there was so much focus on solar and electricity, which obviously is so important in the peninsula but we carried 13,000 people out last year, the amount of tourists who come to Dingle just to do it, and what they spend coming here to do our experience. That's just a great narrative for the peninsula. If we could be used as the model business to go, this is what could be done with this business and then be used for promoting it all over the country, because it's such a reputable business that's built up.
(June 2025)
- “ Going forward, I think the way to look at it is as a community, with all the other businesses on the peninsula, if we can all come together, then there'll be hopefully the potential of us being able to store biofuel on the peninsula so that we can all use it.
(June 2025)

LOOKING AHEAD

- “ The focus shouldn't be just on electricity for the next stage.
(June 2025)

Introduce another strand of activity focusing on tourism experiences. Focus on biodiesel and how it can be sourced

- “ Imagine that media piece and imagine that overall study that could be done if there were five businesses, five fishing and tourism boat operation companies, that all reduced their carbon footprint by 80, 90%. That could be insane for a small tourism town that was a fishing town. I think there's something there.
(May 2024)

Find ways of involving more young people in decision making

- “ The young people involved in tourism should be heard as well. There should be a voice for everybody in the room, and I just don't see that. I'm probably one of the youngest ones. Any of the young people who have moved back here, who would have a really solid voice and opinion, are not able to be involved and committed, so then the decisions are getting made without them being involved, and they're just working away with their own business.
(May 2024)

Work carefully towards being a sustainable destination

- “ There's a way of doing it, the businesses in this peninsula all work so well together but also work very hard on their own. To bring them all together, you need to make sure that at the end of the day the priority is that the business has to make money to stay open. Yes, we all want to drive towards making sure that our business is reducing the effect we're having on the environment, but it can't be the case that that happens and the business closes.
(May 2024)
- “ If you can incorporate in elements, day to day, week to week over time, and then work with other businesses, you'll get towards a sustainable destination. But in my eyes, it needs to be the businesses on the ground who know the peninsula inside out, and who are the ones who are marketing the peninsula. They're the ones, because if you don't have your five or six or ten leading businesses involved and part of it, there's no point in doing it because they're the ones that are actually bringing in 40, 50% of the business into the town.
(May 2024)
- “ It's about doing it in the background, but slowly, the messaging comes out now and again. But it's happening, and everybody knows it's happening, and elements of it are seen without it being pushed in your face.
(May 2024)



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIMILAR PROJECTS

Provide sample road maps and graphic visuals (they were so good for us) to get buy-in

“ People didn't really know what they were signing up to. Then it was so clear when I was at the launch of the EMP, but that took a time. It could be great for other places to see it's not that hard, you literally have this roadmap, it was just so clear. So that should be used as a model for other places. (June 2025)

FOR POLICY MAKERS

Provide supports for businesses and then stipulate that they have to sign up

“ It's a tough one, because you can't really enforce businesses to be part of it, but if there's more supports in place for businesses, that would get more buy-in, and if it was part of certain policies that there would be these supports put in place for businesses to sign up. So, if you are a business that's using X amount of fuel per year, then you have to sign up, and these are the supports in place. Then it's like everybody's doing it, so you just have to do it, but you can get the support and assistance, with a mentor. (June 2025)



PÁDRAIG Ó SÉ

Páidí Ó Sé's Pub Árd a'Bhothair, Ventry

BACKGROUND

Pádraig runs the family-owned pub, which was named after his father, the Kerry GAA legend Páidí Ó Sé. It is near Ventry beach and a ten-minute drive outside Dingle town at the start of the Sleah Head Drive, one of the busiest coastal drives in the summer. The pub serves a lot of food (roughly 70% food and 30% drink). Their peak season is June, July and August but they are also open at weekends all year round and are busy at Christmas, Easter and on bank holiday weekends. Their busiest periods are from lunchtime to about eight or nine in the evening.

REASONS FOR JOINING T&H SEC

“When you see the whole community together, you want to jump with that and there was such a strong engagement from all the businesses, between the pubs, restaurants and all the businesses in West Kerry and there was such good help from the team, everything was put on the plate for you, what you could do with solar panels and all the grants that were there. And then obviously you want to be seen to be making a better effort as well for future generations. (April 2024)

CLIMATE CHANGE CONCERNS

- “The weather changes are a big thing. It would be a topic of conversation, not as much with the older generation, more so with the younger generation coming in where it might be a conversation about the weather and what's happened to certain roads, and the beach obviously is a big one. (April 2024)
- “We're seeing more storms. Before Christmas, there were three storms coming in. We've had a lot more sea on the roads. I see a lot more flooding coming back towards Ventry. The council has done a lot of work down on the beach. So yes, storms and floods have increased significantly. (June 2025)
- “We're looking out for our future generations, we're a coastal town, we're beside the beach and we want to keep an eye on that. (April 2024)
- “We have looked into possibly getting a generator, because power cuts have definitely increased, it's just happening more often. In the wintertime, if we have a power cut on a Saturday, on a busy Bank Holiday Saturday, it can hurt business. We can use our taps but the hot water is out and obviously heating then is out because we changed our heating appliances to eco electric radiators. (June 2025)

IMPACT OF T&H SEC

“ The SEC has passed my expectations, I didn't see I'd get that sort of data in front of me or get good ideas like I did to cut down on the amount of energy I'm using and more ideas for how we can use our waste and all that kind of stuff. I am very happy.
(April 2024)

“ I didn't realize their help would be as much as it was, even in helping to find grants for these appliances and all that. And then there's constant emails from them over things that are coming in, or things that we can apply for that would help us make changes. They're always there to help.
(June 2025)

The business had already replaced the open fire in the bar with a pellet stove, and the oil heating with electric radiators.

DCSix carried out an audit on the pub as part of the Energy Master Plan data gathering. Following the audit they then invested in double-glazed windows in the bar and insulated the attic.

“ They came in and showed me where a lot of my energy was being consumed. Obviously, freezers and fridges throughout the winter months was the biggest one when the bar isn't going at its full pop and finding that there was an extra fridge costing more. Lighting when the pub was open, we changed a lot of lighting to LED which helped save energy as well. It was great to actually see that in front of me and how Barry Banbury could just pull out a laptop and tell me what zones were working the most and what time of the day was peaking the most, and seeing where I can adjust, that was huge.
(April 2024)

The family has ordered solar PV systems for both the pub and the house, but there is a hold up because they have also applied for two EV chargers, which will go in their car park for customers and people doing the Sleah Head Drive and they have also applied to be part of the EasyGo car charging trial.

Pádraig and his team are also continuing to work on food waste and recycling.

“ Food wastage is another thing we zone in on in the bar because usually food waste is a big one going into bins and we use the small compost bins as frequently as we can, and the old school one of just finding a local farmer that has pigs.
(April 2024)

“ I'm much more conscious myself, obviously that Return Scheme has come in, so that's a big part of everyday usage in the background, with your bottles of Mi-Wadi, and cans of Coke, we're making sure that customers aren't damaging the cans, that we're able to get them back every week. So, we'd be religious with those. And then another scheme, we

haven't been able to entirely change it, but certainly, it's a wastage that can be solved in a lot of places, eliminating as many of those ketchup and mayonnaise sachets on family tables, is something we've brought in. Small things like that. We try and do our best. And less paper is being used, we're printing orders going into the kitchen, so less handwritten stuff and paper being thrown out.
(June 2025)

“ Many things have changed since I've been a young fella. It started with an open fire. I can recall my dad throwing half a bag of coal every day into the fire, which has now gone to a pellet stove, which is obviously more friendly to the environment. We used to have oil radiators, which have now changed to electric radiators. And then the equipment that's come in is way better than it was. Rubbish has completely evolved. Everything was just thrown out, then recycling came in. Everything is separated now. The compost bins are there. So, things have changed completely that way.
(June 2025)

WHAT WORKED

The information, help and advice provided by the SEC

- “ The SEC basically put everything on a plate for us.
(April 2024)
- “ Between Ann and the team, they've opened my eyes into seeing what can be done, and the help that's out there, they certainly helped me in changing certain things, helping to reduce waste, using less energy and all that.
(June 2025)
- “ I see panels going up in a lot of places. So, I'm sure it'll make a massive difference.
(June 2025)
- “ I'd say they've done a brilliant job.
(June 2025)

Ann and Martin

- “ Ann Ní Chíobháin who has done most of the work with me has been excellent, and then seeing someone like Martin who used to own the Global Village heading that committee, who had a really reputable restaurant for many years in Dingle, when you see someone like that getting involved as well. They know what they're doing, between the two of them. Ann of course has a business as well, when you see them and what they're doing and meeting them, they're good salespeople, in fairness. And they make sure you don't forget.
(April 2024)

“ You need to keep meeting people, keep setting up the meetings, keep in contact. I'd say when they first put out the survey at the very beginning and gathering all the information on the energy people were using, I can't imagine how difficult that was, getting people to even respond to the email. The biggest dread is, do I have to find out all those files or do I have to go digging for all that information to give. But it just took a few businesses to lead and show, I'm not saying myself, I was following advice from others and then they were coming to me and then when we got the worst of the documents done and when we were being used as the guinea pig, when it was shown in front of us, it was the deal breaker.
(April 2024)

Working with Solar Beo

“ I originally wanted to go with a local company, Solar Beo, who were over the road from us, and I was happy that they won the contract for all businesses. I was happy that it went to a local family in Ventry. So that was the one thing I was hesitant about if they hadn't gotten it, or if I'd been using an out-of-town supplier, that was the one thing I didn't want to do. I wanted to keep that local.
(April 2024)

Negotiating a collective price as a group

“ The businesses going together and getting the best rates, we've all saved money by teaming up together and going for it, which is a one big, massive help. For us, the solar panels haven't been put in yet, there's a waiting list for them currently, but I can't wait to see what sort of energy they'll be saving us. And because we've put in the new rads, I'm hoping that the solar will start to take the cost of the rads away and the costs of running a few of the fridges throughout the night.
(April 2024)

The energy audit

“ We had been looking, a few years ago, at doing the audit, but they came in and it was just done straight away for us. The amount of work they take off you, just to get this done, is just unreal.
(April 2024)

“ You're shown exactly how you can reduce your energy or your energy costs and go solar. When that's put right in front of you, it hits home a lot quicker than reading an email or whatever, when they're actually out meeting you and coming into your premises and showing you what they can do, it's much faster.
(April 2024)

“ Seeing where I could make changes and upgrade things was brilliant.
(June 2025)

Learning from others

“ I met Dinny, the lead farmer, to see his pump machine, his pump machine is on all night. I met him in relation to that because our cooler, which is sending the ice and the water around from the beer cooling system, is similar. I met him to see how he had saved with his milking machine, and he showed me the energy he was saving. Hopefully the vintners can upgrade all the cooling systems as it can be done similarly to the way the farmers are going.
(April 2024)

“ Meeting other businesses, I spoke to a bar in Camp, and they put solar panels on their pub and on their house and they have a similar set up as ourselves where their home is right beside the pub. So, I was able to ask them about it.
(April 2024)

Workshops and events

“ Meeting someone face to face is still the most powerful way of getting a deal done or getting everyone to move together.
(April 2024)

Logging data and feeding it back

“ Giving them the feedback over the changes you're making and logging it is benefiting us, because we're learning from that as well, even the food waste bins that are going back, trying to reduce the amount of food waste going out. By logging, for instance, the ketchup sachets or the extra slice of brown bread that was used in the bowl of soup, small things like that. When it's written down or laid there in front of you, it's obvious where you can make the changes.
(June 2025)

CHALLENGES

Less suitable roof spaces

“ Obviously with the solar panels you need a lot of roof space, but there's so many smaller businesses who wouldn't have really great roof space but they're still so eager to get it done that they want it up on their roof and they want to be seen to be making an effort even though they space might not actually generate much. But they're still going ahead with it. We're lucky that we have massive roof space.
(April 2024)



LOOKING AHEAD

Continue reaching out to businesses

“ There is almost a monthly reach out, if you want to have a meeting, or if you want to have a chat about things you want to do, that monthly face to face meeting is available. So, in that case, they're doing all they can.
(June 2025)

Continue collaborating with Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance

“ I know it's a separate organization, but they are sort of linked, the Dingle Peninsula Tourism Board and the SEC, they both work together as well, which is brilliant, because the Dingle Peninsula Board have such a strong group and a big number of members, as does the SEC and them working together and helping out each other makes a big difference.
(June 2025)

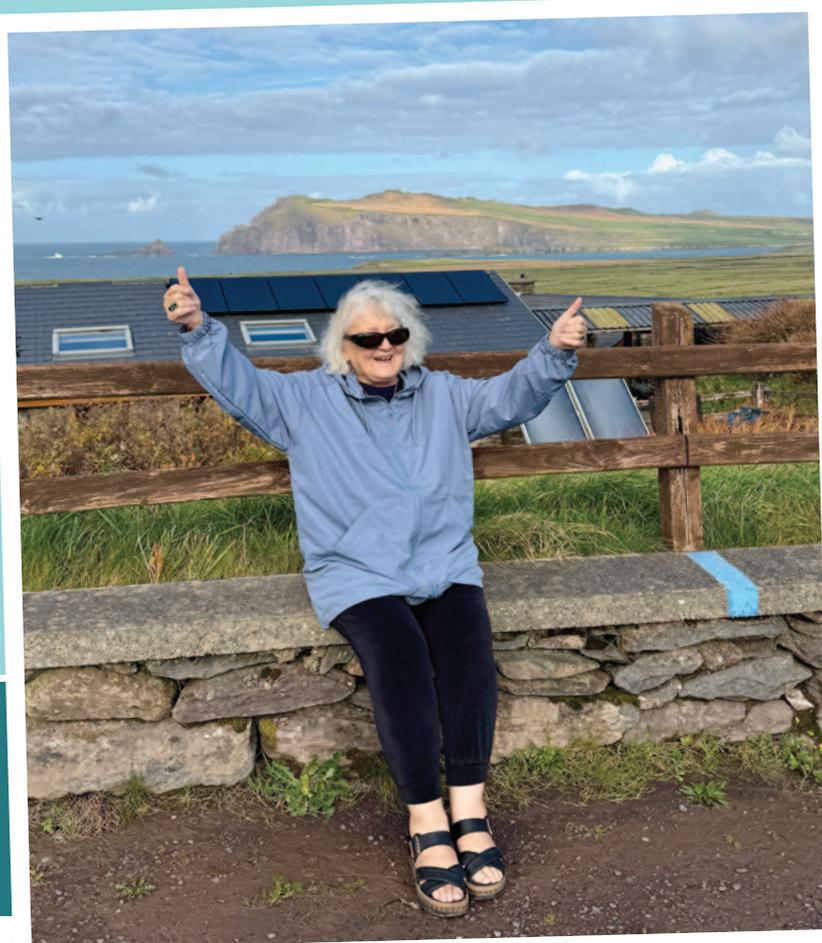
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIMILAR PROJECTS

Get involved

“ I would tell them to take everything that's coming up, if you're being asked to be a guinea pig, or asked to do a trial or whatever, I would take it all because when the information is there in front of you in a laptop written down, it opens your eyes into the wastage, or the over usage, everything that's done. You can't hide from the numbers and the details in front of you when they're there. So, I would say to any sort of pub, restaurant, guest house, if there's a facility or company that can do that for your business, take it with open arms.
(June 2025)

There are really good grants and supports available

“ We got a really, really good oven in as well, which we've applied for a grant for. So, they are available, there's so many, you have the VFI [Vintners Federation of Ireland], the SEAI, the Dingle local group (DPTA), this SEC, the bike to work scheme by the government. They're each offering something, which is great.
(June 2025)



ÁINE UÍ DHUBHSHLÁINE

Tig Áine, An Ghráig, Baile an Fheirtéaraigh

BACKGROUND

Áine was brought up in Bishopstown, Cork until she was 14. Her father worked in the bank and in 1964 the family moved to Tullamore, where they lived in the countryside for four years. Áine loved it. Her family moved again so Áine went to Loretto Boarding School in St. Stephen's Green, Dublin and then trained as a nurse in St. Vincent's Hospital. When she was 21, she met Mike (Micheal Ó Dhubhshláine) in the Ceathrú, Dún Chaoin and they were married the following June. The couple was always interested in alternative sources of energy or 'alternative everything really' and from early on lived the good life and supported the idea of self-sufficiency and producing local produce. While it was a struggle to find property on the peninsula at the time, bit by bit they built up their home and business, Tig Áine café and art gallery, where Áine sold her art. She also did a lot of weaving and taught swimming, art and video production.

Áine is now 75 years old, so last year she leased out the business. This year, her granddaughter, Nicole, and partner, Kyle, joined her and they now run the business. So, Áine is very happily 75% retired.

“ It's living the dream, really. I'm doing a bit of baking, I still make the scones and the brown bread and the lemon drizzle cake, and Nicole makes the brownies, and Kyle makes the apple crumble and the chocolate pudding. We're all cooking, we're all involved in this, but I don't have the worry about it anymore.
(June 2025)

She also still looks after her goat, hens, ducks and geese and continues to grow some vegetables on her smallholding.

Áine initially installed two solar thermal panels to heat her water and then, in 2019, she installed 17 solar PV panels, but she knew this would not be enough for her electricity needs. In 2021, she was a participant in the ESB Networks Dingle Project electric car trial and was given the use of a Hyundai Kona. When the trial ended, she bought a second-hand version of the same car.

REASONS FOR JOINING T&H SEC

Áine joined the SEC to have a platform, to share experiences with the other members and to work together as a group.

“ I'm really a loner. I like to be my own boss always. But I can definitely see the power of twenty people producing electricity together, or twenty people buying something together, as opposed to one person on their own.
(February 2024)

“ We need to be there to do it, to plan it, to figure it out and to find the ways around it and to go and do it. It's the unknown. We don't know what's there but looking back on this year, it obviously is going to even get better.
(February 2024)

CLIMATE CHANGE CONCERNS

“ I feel extremely distressed about it, I really do. I trained as a nurse first. And then I got married when I was 22. And myself, my husband, the minute we got married, we were like hippies, straight into alternative living, providing our own food, not injuring the land, not using wrapping, or too much wrapping. Being careful of the seas and not using anything unnatural when we were growing our own food. (February 2024)

“ Fifty years ago, everybody knew but didn't care that the sea was getting polluted, that the land was being abused by artificial fertilizer. So, I find that highly distressing because we did it ourselves, we did it knowingly. This is what we're passing on to our children. (February 2024)

“ There's more storms and more rain, downpours, which I do remember from when I was a child, but I think they're more frequent now. There are more of them in the year, you're just walking along and it starts to rain, and it's literally out of a sieve. That I think is a little bit different and the storms are more frequent and more scary. Then when it's hot, it's probably a bit hotter and a different kind of heat, a dead heat. I think the rays from the sun are not comfortable or healthy. It feels dusty, hot, and not right. (June 2025)

“ Climate change will impact the coastline. Every single town is built on the mouth of a river, so sadly every town is going to be affected now because the water is going to rise and there'll be awful weather, extreme drought, extreme rain, floods. (February 2024)

“ Government action is 'too little too late. It's like closing the gate when the horse is gone out. But I'm very glad they're doing what they're doing. I would still be hopeful, I will still praise them for doing the little they are doing. (February 2024)

IMPACT OF T&H SEC

Áine took part in the second T&H SEC meitheal. The recent storms and bad weather had affected her existing PV panels, water got in and they were shorting, some of them stopped working, so a big repair job was needed. Solar Beo repaired her old system and added seven new panels.

“ There's nothing as nice as looking at the app, and the app will show me that I'm producing 5.9 kilowatts an hour. Now, the load on the house could be quite high because the restaurant is open. We're here in the house and I have an apartment as well, the load could be something like nine or ten, so I'm only taking a third from the grid. And also, when we're not mad busy or open all day, I could be sending energy back into the grid, which I would do most days too. That has happened a lot now this summer. (June 2025)

“ The pleasure of looking at it, that should be factored in, and there's great pleasure showing people. (June 2025)

The café menu shows that they use all local produce. As part of their marketing campaign, they are now planning to put up a screen which will explain their solar and waste systems.

“ Our business will improve because of that, I'm sure of it. (June 2025)

“ We all started off, and we didn't know what we were doing, we didn't know what we were talking about. We're different people now, we're better educated about it, we have more understanding. And so, the bit that I have now, the solar panels, the car and whatever else I've tried to do, now I'm panning around to see, what can I do next? What system will I try next? Where else might I be able to do something about it? There's definitely possibilities. (June 2025)

“ When you start, you can't stop. You see more possibilities coming at you from every direction. It's very exciting and it is very hopeful in this day, the way the world is upsetting us when we see the news. All of what we're doing is very hopeful. (June 2025)

“ Seeing is believing, people coming down and they see me charging my electric car, and then I say, look up there, that's where we're generating the energy. You can nearly say that my electric car is running from the sun and the light around us. So, it's magic, and it's also common sense. Don't waste anything, use it or find a way to use it, it's not costly and it's not hard either. (June 2025)

WHAT WORKED

Working together as a group

“ It's great for me because I'm not alone. I was never actually alone, but now we are strong because we're together. (June 2025)

Support from the project team

“ The absolute main thing for me was support. If I have a question, then I can ask Ann or I can ask anybody, and if they don't know the answer, they will find the answer. It's because we're together that we're able to do that. Ann will know about it, or if she doesn't, she will definitely be able to find out, and she has a big team working with her too, I wouldn't know them that well, but I have them helping me through Ann. That's huge. It takes away some of the fear because I know that there's technical support. (June 2025)

Becoming informed

“ The wording, the technology, it's very hard to follow it. When I get my electricity bill, you'd want to have a degree in engineering to figure out what they are saying and that is the case with everything to do with alternative energy. It's something we have to face and learn and figure out. It's not that I know much now, but I am more informed now than I ever was. Being better informed is the best part of it. (February 2024)

Solar PV tender process

Áine was very glad to be one of the businesspeople helping to assess the solar PV tenders and getting a collective price reduction. She was able to share her experience of having 17 solar PV panels since 2019.

“ I knew what was coming down the line to everybody. I knew because I'm there already. And one of the things I said was maintenance. It's fine for the company to set it up but you have to have a maintenance package going with it. They have to be there to fix it if it goes wrong. I pushed as much as I could and sure enough, the two companies responded by saying, we'll do that. (February 2024)

Open days and events

Áine found these very helpful, especially hearing the experiences of others and seeing how people have done things she might not have thought about.

“ I'm hoping now that my granddaughter and her partner will get fierce interested in it as well. I hope they will do, they're both very, very technical. (June 2025)

CHALLENGES

Áine was disappointed that she was not able to get a grant from SEAI for the additional seven panels that were added to her roof this year because she had already received an SEAI grant for the first installation.

“ I said to them, what business are you in now? Are you in the business of supporting renewable energy? Are you in the business of looking at dates when people got grants? Because I'm still investing the same amount of money, whether you'll give me a grant or not. They won't give me the grant, but I think I'm okay. I'll just keep going with it. But I think that's a mistake on their part, because myself, and the likes of me, who are going into the second round, it's all about the energy we're producing, it's not about did we get a grant before or not. (June 2025)

“ I'm still going to win out. Because I have a business I can put the cost against the business costs. I get my VAT back, and then I'll get a bit every year for five years, or something like that, on the cost of the 7,500 I spent this year on it, that'll be put against any profit I have for the next five years, a bit every year. So, I will win out in the end, financially as well as everything else. (June 2025)

LOOKING AHEAD

Stay together and continue working

“ I hope it continues, and I hope we meet regularly, and I hope we talk about things and maybe develop some of the new ideas that might be coming up. If we don't have the group and the meetings, then we're just going to stay the same, rather than going forward and maybe being able to produce our own energy and our own gas. (June 2025)

“ It's much better to be in a sustainable group, or parish, or peninsula, rather than trying to do it on your own. It's much, much better to be in a group, we're way more powerful. (June 2025)

Continue the funding

“ We want to keep our SEC officers employed. We want to keep them there. For me, that's huge. Because they're dedicating their time to that. Where am I going to find time to see what's coming down the line and put energy and time into it? I never would have had the chance to do it because I'd be trying to pay the VAT, pay the rates, pay the employers PRSI, pay the mortgage. (February 2024)

Publicise the SEC and what is being done

“ One of the things we can do is advertise that we are a sustainable energy community, because I find the tourists really like that. I find the tourists really want to be part of keeping the peninsula alive and sustaining the peninsula. That's what tourists want. They do not want mass production, they do not want to be considered a burden. They want to be adding to the community and saving or helping the community if they can. They want to be a plus, and that includes our culture, speaking Irish, being interested in Irish or having events in Irish and Irish music, singing, dancing, reading poetry or talking or anything. (June 2025)

Food waste

In Tig Áine most of the food waste goes to feed the hens, ducks and geese, or ends up in the compost heap and because they are almost vegetarian, they have hardly any meat or fish waste. However, Áine feels it is an important issue that needs to be tackled on the peninsula and can be best done as a group.

“ *What we're going for now, maybe not us particularly, but the peninsula, is to make our own cooking gas with our food waste. So that's a great possibility, because the gas bill is huge for cooking. We're going to be looking at more of that in the autumn.*
(June 2025)

Local energy and grid

“ *I suppose the next phase for energy is, if the grid fails, can we switch on our own grid? We're not there yet, but if we could find a way, which I'm sure we will, that would be great.*
(June 2025)

“ *The grid fails very often and it's going to fail more. There's going to be more storms. And we need to plan how we're going to get around it. It's a necessary thing, and the more we can depend on ourselves for energy, aren't we the better off?*
(June 2025)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIMILAR PROJECTS

“ *Take a chance. Go for it. You're not going to know unless you try.*
(February 2024)

“ *Be as enthusiastic as we are.*
(June 2025)

FOR POLICY MAKERS

Provide funding to pay people

“ *People need to be paid for it to work. Somebody has to have it as a part of their income. It can't be all voluntary. It'll only work if it's somebody's job to do the co-ordinating of everything, and to put forward the ideas, and to do the research on what worked in other places.*
(June 2025)

“ *Talk to the people on the ground.*
(June 2025)

Acknowledgements

The Corca Dhuibhne Tourism & Hospitality Sustainable Energy Community (T&H SEC) Learning Brief was co-created by the management group and participating businesses, reflecting the collective effort and commitment of many individuals and organisations.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the steering group and all participating businesses for their openness, engagement, and willingness to share their experiences and learnings.

- Jim Garvey, Benners Hotel, Skellig Hotel, SuperValu, Dingle
- Helen Heaton, Castlewood House, Dingle
- Mahmood Houssain, Inch Beach House, Cottages and Campsite, Inch
- Denise Begley, An Riasec B&B
- Margaret Flannery, Murphy's Ice Cream
- Lorcan Slattery, Dingle Garden Town House
- Lasse Mulcahy, Louis Mulcahy Handmade Pottery, Baile na Fheirtéaraigh
- Rose Spillane, Spillane's Bar, Maharees
- Michéal O'Coileain, Sciúird Archaeological Tours

We also thank the members of the management group:

- Ann Ní Chiobháin (Project co-ordinator, Dingle Hub)
- Martin Bealin (SEC Leader)
- Deirdre de Bhailís (Dingle Hub)
- Declan Murphy and Daithi Gallagher (Fáilte Ireland)

- Helen O'Connor Barry and John Griffin (Kerry County Council)
- Maire Ní Mhainín (Údarás na Gaeltachta)
- Jonathan Sandham and Barry Bambury (DCSix Technologies)

Special thanks to Clare Watson, who led the reflective learning and evaluation process, facilitating interviews, collating feedback, and supporting the development of this learning brief.

We gratefully acknowledge the support and funding provided by Fáilte Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, and Kerry County Council, which enabled the recruitment of a dedicated project co-ordinator, the development of the Energy Master Plan, and the delivery of workshops and events.

We are indebted to DCSix Technologies for their technical expertise in energy auditing, monitoring, and the development of the Energy Master Plan, and to Solar Beo for their engagement in the solar PV tender process.

We would also like to thank the West Kerry Dairy Farmers SEC, whose pioneering work provided inspiration, practical guidance, and peer support throughout this project.

Finally, we thank all those who contributed their time, knowledge, and enthusiasm to making this project a success, and to building a more sustainable future for the Dingle Peninsula.

APPENDIX

The following two projects are not directly involved in, or funded by, the T&H SEC but there are very clear synergies and crossovers.

ENPOWER

ENPOWER is a three-year project, funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement N° 101096354, and running from September 2023 until August 2026. It aims to improve energy systems by empowering citizens and fostering energy-secure communities through innovative methodologies and technologies. It has 28 partners across 13 European countries, and is running pilots in six countries, including Ireland.

Dublin-based non-profit energy R&D institute EPRI Europe, Dingle Hub, MaREI, energy solutions company DCSix Technologies, and Irish energy utility ESB Innovation are leading the Irish pilot, which is testing innovative techniques that use information and analysis to help the local community produce and manage its own energy more efficiently and reliably, and enabling them to become energy self-sufficient.

As part of ENPOWER, a community-focused digital platform is being trialled by DCSix with members of the T&H SEC on the Dingle peninsula. The aim of the platform is to lower energy spending through community meitheals instead of taking an individual household approach. These meitheals will include solar installations, LED upgrades, reviewing energy tariffs, food waste management, etc. As has been demonstrated by the T&H SEC, approaching these efforts as a community rather than as individuals can decrease costs and increase awareness.

As part of the trial, businesses are being asked to register by uploading their company details, opportunities identified in any audits completed and track details like energy consumption and waste on an ongoing basis. They will then be kept up to date with meitheals that are being run in the area, as well as the latest methods and technologies to reduce their energy spending. If they're interested in joining a meitheal their details are already on file, and they just have to click a button to register interest.

Funding provided through ENPOWER has enabled Ann and Martin to continue engaging with the T&H SEC businesses during the funding hiatus between Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the SEC. They are currently encouraging businesses to join up and register their interest for solar PV on the platform.

DINGLE CUP PROJECT

Dingle Cup Project is a community-led initiative on the Dingle Peninsula to reduce single-use waste through the Cupa Chorca Dhuibhne campaign. The initiative is led by the Corca Dhuibhne Community Forum, supported by Údarás na Gaeltachta, and backed by Dingle Tidy Towns and the Dingle Chamber of Commerce.

This grassroots movement encourages locals and visitors alike to 'Choose to Reuse' by opting for reusable coffee cups instead of disposable ones.

The campaign's broader mission is to protect the natural beauty of the Dingle Peninsula by reducing reliance on disposable items such as plastic bottles, vapes, and coffee cups - many of which end up as litter or in landfills. By making reusable options easy and accessible, the initiative hopes to foster a cultural shift and empower individuals to take positive local action in response to the climate emergency.

As part of the campaign's future vision, the team is actively researching the development of a Dingle Cupa / Cupán Chorca Dhuibhne made from non-plastic, environmentally friendly materials to further enhance the sustainability of the project.

So far, in the campaign the Cup Project group have been out and about over the month of July 2025 encouraging the public to bring their own cups and letting them know cafés that offer discounts. Posters and graphics are displayed around Dingle town and two large signs have been placed on the road into Dingle town to let everyone know the mission. A social media campaign ran over July and August with messages from locals, facts about single use coffee cups and ways to reduce the single use plastics in your life.

Ann is part of the Dingle Cup team, and she draws on her relationships with the T&H SEC businesses to bring their views, thoughts and concerns to the campaign group discussions.

OCTOBER 2025