

## **11% increase in rainfall predicted for Ireland by 2050 due to Climate Change - SEI**

An 11% increase in rainfall in Ireland is predicted by 2050 as a result of Climate Change. That is according to David Taylor, Chief Executive – SEI, who was chairing a Climate Change seminar in Dublin today, entitled *Weathering the Storm*. The seminar debated the impacts of climate change in Ireland and the need for us all to take action on the energy related causes now.

Climate Change refers to the phenomenon that is causing the earth to become warmer which means that our climate and our weather systems are changing. Most scientists now agree that the fossil fuels, which provide the bulk of our energy, release carbon dioxide, are largely responsible for Climate Change and that the choices we make today will decide the future climate our children inherit.

According to research commissioned with SEI support, the impact of Climate Change on our country by 2050 will be sizeable. Ireland's winters will be wetter, with an increased risk of flooding as a result of more frequent storms and localised rainfall. The temperature in January will have increased by 1.5 degrees Celsius. Winter conditions in Northern Ireland and the north midlands will be similar to the south west coast today. While milder winters might seem like a good thing, this is not necessarily the case. Rainfall will increase by 11%.

Speaking at the seminar, Mr. Taylor said, "Climate Change is already starting to affect Ireland, as evidenced in recent years by the increase in extreme weather events such as floods and storms. Already there has been a noticeable increase in flooding, particularly in the west of Ireland. Likewise we have experienced more summer droughts. If this continues the impacts will be substantial".

The theme of this year's Energy Awareness Week, which concludes tomorrow, is combating Climate Change. The campaign aims to encourage everyone to play a part in addressing this very serious issue. A special website [www.combatclimatechange.ie](http://www.combatclimatechange.ie) has been developed which highlights the actions that can be taken by people to help Combat Climate Change.

Mr. Taylor said, "The increasing reality of climate change means that acting alone is not an option – not for government, companies or individuals. The Kyoto protocol ensures that we all have a meaningful part to play and the theme of this year's energy awareness week has been to urge people to take action to combat climate change".

Professor Andrew Watkinson was guest speaker at the event. Director of the Tyndall Centre in the UK, Prof. Watkinson was one of the lead authors of the recent UK Foresight report on Future Flooding commissioned by the Office of Science and Technology and has recently carried out a review of the UK Defra research programme on flooding and coastal defence.

Meteorologist Brendan McWilliams also addressed the seminar. Mr Mc Williams said "The evidence that we can expect significant changes to our climate in the coming decades, and that indeed these are taking place already, is becoming more persuasive every day. Our strategy must be one of informed adaptation – of trying to anticipate how we may be affected by climate change and then formulating our national and business plans to minimise the negative impacts."

Sustainable Energy Ireland was established on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2002 as a statutory authority charged with promoting and assisting the development of sustainable energy in Ireland. Sustainable Energy Ireland is funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 with programmes part financed by the European Union.

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**Editors Notes:**

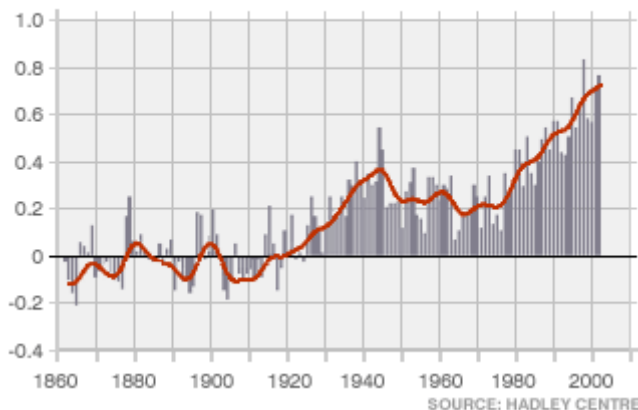
**What is Climate Change?**

Climate change refers to the phenomenon that is causing the earth to become warmer which means that our climate and our weather systems are changing. This may sound like something vague and futuristic but in fact climate change is a reality. Today, the earth is hotter than it has been in two thousand years:

- 1990s was the warmest decade
- 1998 was the warmest year
- Snow cover is down 10% in the last 40 years

**Variations in global near-surface land temperature**

Temperature variation in degrees C



**What causes it?**

Most scientists now agree that human activity is largely responsible for climate change and that the choices we make today will decide the future of our climate.

- Most of the energy we use to heat our homes, for electricity and transport comes from fossil fuels such as oil, gas and coal
- When fossil fuels are burned, they release carbon dioxide which is the main greenhouse gas
- Greenhouse gases cause the earth to heat up by trapping the sun's heat in the earth's atmosphere – acting like a greenhouse