



**Media Information**

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## **New concept in building design offers thermal comfort without the need for heating**

A new approach to designing buildings, known as passive solar design, has come to Ireland, offering excellent thermal comfort, but requiring virtually no heating. This fundamental rethink in the way buildings are being designed, constructed and operated has been brought to the forefront by the continued threat of climate change and the volatility of oil prices. That is according to Paul Kellett of Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI), who was speaking at 'See the Light 2005', the annual solar energy conference and study tour, organised by SEI in association with the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI).

Mr. Kellett said, "A building that utilises passive solar design is naturally heated and cooled, requires less energy, does not compromise on comfort or architectural aesthetics and is less harmful to our environment. Today, there are well over 10,000 passive houses across Europe and now commercial buildings, factories, hotels, offices and supermarkets are also embracing the standard. The concept has already become a resounding market success in Austria, Switzerland, Scandinavia and Germany", Mr. Kellett said.

Key topics for discussion at the conference include *Developing an indigenous market for passive solar houses (presented by Erwin Mlecnik – Passivhuis Platform, Belgium)*. The first factory built timber-frame Irish passive solar house, constructed in Galway in March, 2005 - without any central heating - will also be showcased at the conference.

According to SEI, the imperative to further develop Ireland's renewable energy resources is being driven by a number of key elements including: climate change and the resulting constraints on the emission of greenhouse gases; security of supply concerns regarding over-reliance on oil and natural gas; and the recent price turbulence in oil markets.

“As global warming accelerates and our energy demands continue to rise, we must adopt cleaner, more sustainable sources of energy. Green building should not be viewed as a passing fad, but rather as a valid and valuable growing trend”, Mr. Kellett concluded.

Also Speaking at the event Barbara Faigle, an architect from Archkom in Germany, highlighted the success story of the Energon office building in Ulm, the largest office building achieving the Passive House standard in Europe: “Our client wanted a prestigious building with a striking modern appearance and a strong environmental stance. By using passive solar design the building is now so energy efficient that it requires almost no artificial heating and cooling. The results have exceeded all expectations and tenants enjoy the bright working space, the high air quality and outstanding comfort”.

Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) is the statutory authority charged with promoting and assisting the development of energy efficiency and renewable energy. SEI 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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