



Media Information

01 September 2006

Efficient energy use and increased use of renewable energy sources critical as energy costs continue to rise

Sustainable Energy Ireland highlights significant progress as it publishes 2005 annual report

The competitiveness of the Irish economy will be severely impacted by the continuing rise in oil and gas prices unless we prioritise energy efficiency and renewable sources of energy, according to Professor Frank Convery, Chairman - Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI). These comments came as SEI, which is responsible for promoting and assisting the development of sustainable energy in Ireland, today published its annual report for 2005.

Professor Convery said, "In 2005 oil and gas prices continued to move upwards. The geopolitics of the Middle East continue to ensure that for the foreseeable future we have the prospect of supply interruption from the part of the world where most of the world's remaining low cost oil is located. Therefore, price spikes seems to be in our future with serious implications for industry, consumers and overall economic competitiveness. Managing this challenge is critical and increased energy conservation and use of renewable energy is at the heart of the solution. SEI continues to develop programmes and to implement government policy to ensure that consumers, industry and the public sector all act positively in regard to renewable energy and energy conservation."

Mr. David Taylor, Chief Executive of SEI added, "SEI made significant progress in 2005, contributing to the growing institutional, business and public awareness of the long-term economic and environmental impact of Ireland's high reliance on imported fossil fuel energy. SEI has ambitious targets to shift this reliance and to make the best use of its resources to engage all audiences that will ultimately deliver a sustainable energy economy. Against a backdrop of higher and more volatile energy prices, this will be achieved through SEI's existing programmes, by developing new initiatives and by delivering government policy including the five year €65 million renewable energy support programme announced as part of the Minister for Finance's 2006 budget".

Sustainable Energy Ireland's 2005 annual report highlights progress on a number of fronts. Across the organisations five priority areas key highlights include:

1) Renewable Energy

- €2.4m to support and accelerate the deployment rate of renewable energy technology.
- The submission to Government of a strategy group report on Combined Heat and Power.
- Support to the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources on a Pilot Excise Relief Programme to stimulate uptake of biofuels.

2) Built Environment

- 1,500 homes approved under the House of Tomorrow Programme, bringing the total to over 3,000 units and representing a funding commitment of €18 million.
- The publication of a draft action plan for public consultation on the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive.
- €1.79 million to support the Public Sector Programme which promotes energy efficiency in new and retrofit public sector projects.
- Energy improvements to 1,813 homes under the Low-Income Housing Programme.

3) Industrial Energy

- The introduction of a voluntary Energy Agreements Programme to protect industrial competitiveness.
- A reduction in CO₂ emissions of 133,589 tonnes by 85 of Ireland's largest industrial users through participation in SEI's Large Industry Energy Network.

4) The Consumer

- Highly successful Energy Awareness Week and re-launched website.
- €0.63 million expenditure to support SEI's Renewable Energy Information Office.
- 450 interactive school workshops held reaching over 13,000 primary school children.

5) Policy Advice and Support

- Support to Government on the publication of a Consultation Paper on Energy Research Development and Demonstration.
- Support to Government on the drafting of a consultation paper on a joint strategy for renewable energy in the all-island energy market up to 2010.
- Publication of the third edition of the Energy in Ireland report examining energy use since 1990.
- Publication of a report on Energy Consumption and CO₂ Emissions in the Residential Sector.

A full update on achievements and progress across SEI's priority areas is included in the annual report, which is available for download on www.sei.ie.

For further information please contact:

Joe Carmody / Donnchadh O'Leary
Edelman
01-6789333

Editors Notes:

About SEI

Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) is the statutory authority charged with promoting and assisting the development of sustainable energy. SEI is funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 with programmes part-financed by the European Union.