

Speech for Mr. Noel Dempsey TD, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources for the Sustainable Energy Ireland Awards at the Berkeley Court Hotel on Thursday 16th November 2007.

I recently met with an employee of the National Lottery who had the wonderful job of presenting the Lotto winners with their big cheques.

One of his great stories was about the lady from Dublin who won over half a million pounds back in the 90s.

When she got the cheque, she informed the Lottery officials that the first thing she was going to do was go home, turn on the immersion... and leave it on all night !

All her life her husband and her father before him had watched the spending in the household.

So the family was always warned to turn off the lights and the immersion.

And the day she picked up the LOTTO cheque, she had no money worries.

Unfortunately, Irish industry does not have the luxury of being able to leave the use of energy unchecked.

There is an urgent need for better management of energy in all areas of industry and commerce in this country.

So, it is a great pleasure for me to be here this evening at the third annual sustainable energy awards.

Tonight we celebrate the most innovative and successful Irish energy efficiency projects that are making a tangible difference to costs and the environment.

This year over 117 sites all over the country are involved in the competition, accounting for a combined energy spend of €400 million every year.

As a result of your efforts and initiatives, energy savings of over €28 million are being achieved.

Obviously the savings are very important to your companies.

But these energy savings also play an important role in helping Ireland meet its Kyoto and climate change targets.

I acknowledge the progress made by your companies in energy management, industrial process redesign, renewable energy, commercial lighting projects, improved heating plant operations and energy awareness campaigns.

But all of us – Government, employers and employees – must work together to keep this momentum going.

Energy management is very important for companies in the context of rising energy costs, security of supply issues and increased awareness of corporate environmental responsibility.

Your achievements confirm the findings in the recently published Stern report.

It established the clear business case for early action on climate change.

It found that that energy efficiency measures across all energy sectors, and greater use of renewable technologies in our electricity generation, heat systems and transport fuels contribute to meeting our climate change commitments.

Today we are also seeing pressures coming down the line on maintaining secure and dependable access to energy resources for all.

And I am giving high priority to effective actions including interconnection and diversification of supply.

With these imperatives facing us, the challenges are clear, and so our response must be timely and robust.

It is now a strategic priority to move our economy towards greater energy efficiency and a lower carbon and greenhouse gas emissions footprint.

For business that means doing what Irish companies do well – facing down the competitiveness challenge and taking proactive steps to ensure success.

This is exactly what the Sustainable Energy Awards are all about, and I congratulate and thank all of you, here tonight, for your leadership in this regard.

From an energy policy perspective, our response is set out in the Green Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland'.

This Green Paper, which I launched recently, is a framework for future policy and initiatives and sets out a range of targets and options for our future energy policy direction.

Given the importance of energy issues, I have asked for your co-operation and input in this matter.

And judging by your enthusiasm and your high awareness of the issues involved, I know that many of you will have already responded to the questions as part of our ongoing consultation.

However I would like to invite those that have not yet responded to do so before the first of December deadline.

As I said earlier, it is great to be able to celebrate the success in energy management this evening.

I congratulate Sustainable Energy Ireland for their work in organising the awards and I also thank ESB Customer Services for their co-sponsorship of the awards.

I am delighted to see the growing number of participants in the competition and I hope the competition extend and develop further across our small and medium enterprise sector in the future.

There were 154 nominees for this year's awards and I commend your work and your success.

I also congratulate the winning companies.

In my view the real winners tonight are the people of Ireland who will benefit from your efforts.

I urge each and every one of you to continue to work on this and to encourage other companies to join this winning team in the battle for energy efficiency.

Thank you