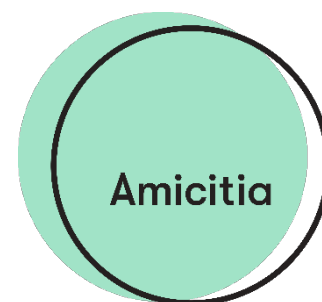


ATHENRY ENERGY MASTER PLAN

October 2022

Supported by



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Athenry profile

Athenry, or as it's known in Irish - Baile Átha an Rí, is a town in County Galway, Ireland, which lies 25 kilometres east of Galway city. The town of Athenry is located on the Clarin River, with the surrounding rural area defined by generally flat open countryside, with medium to small fields marked by the familiar stone walls of Connaught. By road, Athenry is served by the M6 motorway which links Galway city to Dublin. By rail, it is served by the Athenry railway station and lies on the Galway–Dublin main line of the Irish rail network and is also impacted by the Limerick-Ennis line.

Athenry is one of the best-preserved medieval towns in Ireland, retaining the upstanding remains of most of its original high-status buildings, in addition to its medieval street pattern and even individual property boundaries, or burgage plots.

Athenry began its existence with the erection of a castle by Meyler de Bermingham, 2nd Baron of Athenry in 1238. The Anglo-Normans first came to Ireland seventy years before with the approval of the King of England, Henry II. It was not until 1235 that the Richard de Burgo-led invasion resulted in the subjugation of the province of Connacht. Due to its location, Athenry has played a very prominent role in Irish history, witnessing both the Norman and Cromwellian invasions, as well as many attacks by Irish armies.

The historic past of the town is visibly symbolised by Athenry Castle, which has undergone some recent renovations and contains an audio-visual room as well as an exhibition. Athenry affords tourists the ideal base to explore Connemara and the Burren. As well as the castle, visitors could take a look at The Fields of Athenry Thatched Heritage Cottage, as well as the heritage centre that brings medieval Athenry to life.

Today, Athenry is a country town that acts as a market and service centre for the surrounding agricultural hinterland, with the main administrative centre pivoting around the market square. The town's location within commuting distance of Galway City has resulted in an increase in population and a greater demand for housing and services. Due to the historic town walls, much of the development in modern times has been concentrated in the Northwest and Southeast of Athenry.

Athenry has many active groups within the town which contribute to the town's environmental, cultural, tourism and social activities. The Tidy Towns have been awarded for their tree planting efforts. There is also an active Community Council, Heritage Centre and cultural groups. Galway Rural Development, who administer the Leader programme, are based in the town. Their offices are close to the new BIA Innovator Campus which is due to open soon with food production units and co-working kitchens, learning and innovation in one location.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Amicitia: Facilitating a Just Transition in Athenry

The Athenry SEC forms part of the Amicitia social enterprise, which has operated from its social hub in Athenry since 2015. Through this hub and other community-based projects they bring people together to support rural regeneration that is both just and sustainable. Funding through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund will transform this hub into a community cafe, events and garden space. Planning permission was approved on August 29th, 2022, to proceed to the next stage of this project.

The renovations will provide new facilities for the community to gather and tackle the complex challenges highlighted in this document. Changes of this magnitude will be difficult and there is a risk that the most marginalised members of society will be further left behind if the transition to a carbon-neutral society is not fair and equitable. To help counteract this, Amicitia will create meaningful employment opportunities for people with criminal convictions and those with disabilities to facilitate a just transition. Pobal's Kickstart Fund has provided funding to support these activities. A feasibility study is currently underway in collaboration with Spéire Nua. This study will look into the feasibility of creating an internship program for people with criminal convictions that contribute to the implementation of opportunities identified in this energy master plan, such as retrofitting homes.

Amicitia has well-established ties with several disability support groups in the area due to their work providing assistive technologies to these organisations. These technologies, provided by its enterprise partner, Independent Living Ireland, allow older people and people with disabilities to live in their communities for longer while reducing social isolation and loneliness. It is necessary to connect with these groups and give them a voice in the projects that are happening to tackle climate change in the town.

All of the projects Amicitia engage in are inclusive and designed to build relationships based on shared interests. This includes an exploration of biodiversity and food systems on a 2-acre site at the edge of town. The Community Foundation for Ireland has provided funding to help develop this community garden and a comprehensive biodiversity strategy for the town. This project complements the excellent work of the Tidy Towns, who have long championed environmental initiatives in the area.

While Amicitia initiated the Athenry SEC, it is critical to recognise the importance of collaboration with other climate action groups and individuals. This energy master plan builds on our previous planning project to '[Reimagine Athenry](#)', which laid the groundwork for these efforts and sparked new initiatives in the community. We can collectively play a significant role and bring about more sustainable and regenerative ways of living alongside the natural environment. But only if we continue to build capacity and embed social innovation in the town. This plan is another step on this journey, and we invite you to participate, learn with us, and contribute in any way you can.

More details can be found on www.amicitia.org

Glossary of Terms

Although all efforts have been made to keep the language in this report non-technical, through the use of infographics and normal language it is not always possible. In order to mitigate against this, we have provided a glossary of key terms used throughout this report and an explanation of their meaning. An additional excellent resource for understanding all terminology around energy and the environment is <https://climatejargonbuster.ie/Energy Efficiency>

Energy Efficiency - It is energy efficient when we use less energy to achieve the same result.

Register of Opportunities (RoO) - The Register of Opportunities is a list of projects or opportunities within your community that if executed will result in energy efficiency and a reduction in energy use and the associated CO₂ output.

Kilowatt-hours (kWh) - One kilowatt-hour is equivalent to 1000 watts of energy used for 1 hour. For example, a 100-watt lightbulb switched on for 10 hours uses one kWh of electricity.

Thermal Energy - Defined as the energy used to generate heat. This commonly refers to the energy used to heat homes by burning oil, timber, peat or using electricity in heat pumps.

Energy Savings - Energy in whatever format it is being consumed usually costs money (€). By reducing the amount of energy consumed you are also reducing the cost associated with providing that energy.

Building Energy Rating (BER) - BER stands for Building Energy Rating. A BER certificate shows you the energy performance of your home. It is a good indicator of how much you will spend on energy (like heat and light) and how much CO₂ you will release to heat your home to a comfortable level.

The BER rating goes from A to G. A-rated homes are the most energy-efficient, and comfortable and typically have the lowest energy bills. G-rated homes are the least energy efficient and require a lot of energy to heat the home.

Renewable Energy - Renewable energy comes from renewable resources like wind energy, solar energy, or biomass. These resources can regenerate naturally, and we can use them repeatedly without reducing their supply.

Carbon Dioxide/ CO₂ - Carbon dioxide is a powerful greenhouse gas. It is naturally part of the air we breathe. However, human activities like the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation have led to an increase in CO₂ in the air that contributes to climate change.

Carbon Footprint - Carbon footprint measures the carbon emissions linked to a particular activity or product. It includes emissions involved in all stages of making and using a product or carrying out an activity. The lower the carbon footprint the less that a product or activity contributes to climate change.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) - This Government scheme provides financial support to renewable electricity projects in Ireland to help us achieve our renewable electricity goals. It also aims to increase community participation in, and ownership of, renewable electricity projects. It aims to make sure electricity consumers get value for money and to improve the security of our electricity supply.

Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) - An SEC is a community in which everyone works together to develop a sustainable energy system. To do so, they aim as far as possible to be energy efficient, to use renewable energy where feasible, and to develop decentralized energy supplies.

Units

Throughout this report, we present energy use and energy production, in kilowatt or megawatt hours per annum (KWh/yr) and (MWh/yr). These units of measurement are used regardless of the fuel used. As a reference point, a typical house consumes approximately 22MWh per annum. We also present carbon emissions in tonnes or kg of CO₂/annum. Energy costs are presented in euro spent on energy per annum.

Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2021

- The Climate Action Plan (CAP) is a roadmap developed by the Irish government for taking decisive action to reduce Ireland's emissions by 51% of 2018's totals by 2030, and net zero by 2050. This roadmap sets out targets for achieving these goals and the ways to go about it. This is done sector by sector with a clear goal set out for each sector. Table 1 shows the proposed emissions reductions by sector to achieve the targets set out in this plan
- The statutory national climate objective and 2030 targets are aligned with Ireland's obligations under the Paris Agreement and with the European Union's objective to reduce GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030 (compared to 1990 levels) and to achieve climate neutrality in the European Union by 2050
- Targets for each sector of the economy will be updated annually, including in 2022, to ensure alignment with the governments' legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings
- Whilst all the sectors referenced in Table 1 are relevant in some form or another to this EMP, of particular importance are the Electricity, Transport and the Built environment sectors, which feature prominently in the report

Table 1 – Summary of the sectoral targets within the Climate Action Plan

Sector	2018 Emissions (Megatonnes of CO2 equivalent)	2030 target Emissions (Megatonnes of CO2 equivalent)	% Reduction relative to 2018
Electricity	10.5	2 - 4	62-81%
Transport	12.0	6 - 7	42-50%
Built environment	9.0	4 -5	44-56%
Industry	8.5	5 -6	29-41%
Agriculture	23.0	16 - 18	22-30%
Land use, land use change, Forestry & Marine	4.8	2 - 3	37-58%
Unallocated Savings	N/A	4	N/A

- One of the standout targets for the Electricity sector which is particularly relevant for the Athenry SEC is the target of increasing the amount of electricity generated by renewable sources to 80%. SECs can play their part through small-scale renewable energy generation in the community as will be discussed later in the report
- Regarding transport, the expectation is that Electric Vehicles will cover 40% of car journeys by 2030. Conversely, public and active transport services will receive heavy investment, enabling an additional 500,000 daily journeys
- Perhaps the sector of most importance to the Athenry SEC is the Built Environment. In the residential sector some of the most ambitious targets include:
 - Retrofitting 500,000 homes to a B2 equivalent BER standard
 - Installing 600,000 heat pumps in residential buildings

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Energy Master Plan Summary

To assist in achieving the Athenry Sustainable Energy Community's goals, an Energy Master Plan study has been conducted. This Energy Master Plan (EMP) has been funded by SEAI to assist in developing and refining short, medium, and long-term plans for the Athenry Sustainable Energy Community.

The Master Plan aims to help communities understand their current energy usage and carbon footprint so that they can understand where they currently are, thereby allowing them to set reduction targets for the future.

The information gathered and tools developed to review projects will help the SEC strive toward being an exemplary model in the transition to a low-carbon community.

The Energy Master Plan is based on a mixture of desktop research utilizing publicly available information sets from a range of sources CSO, SEAI, POWSCAR, CIBSE, Pobal, County Council, etc.

Using modeling tools and methodologies developed in-house by Plan Energy Consulting, the Energy Master Plan will also capture the energy consumption, emissions and spend within the community.

The EMP report begins with a sectoral energy breakdown that will give a broad overview of each sector's (Residential, Commercial, Transport) energy consumption, energy cost and contribution to CO₂ emissions in the Athenry SEC, followed by a brief discussion on how the SEC compares to national averages.

These sections form the basis of the recommendations and options supplied for a transition to renewable energy sources in each of the sectors as well as opportunities for energy reduction and increased efficiency within the Register of Opportunities document.

The EMP will identify the potential for the implementation of sustainable transport models such as electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, alongside renewable energy generation possibilities from many varying sources such as wind, solar etc.

Reviewing the natural resources available to the community, high level analysis is provided on various renewable energy technologies that the community could further pursue. A wide range of natural resources are often within a community's grasp, however the understanding of how to progress from a concept through to reality can be an enormous barrier.

This EMP outlines the processes required by the SEC to quantify what these resources can offer, alongside how renewable projects can transition from an idea to a system that is owned by the community, contributing to the sustainable, decarbonisation of the area.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Finally, the EMP will conclude with an Action Plan and Register of Opportunities section, which the community can use as a benchmarking tool, as they seek to become more energy efficient and reduce their carbon footprint over the next decade.

Perhaps the primary benefit of the EMP is that it can be used as a roadmap for the SEC's progression towards sustainable energy and can be used to support applications for capital grants to upgrade existing housing and commercial building stock.

Additionally, the EMP can also be used as a mechanism to increase awareness in energy efficiency. This process begins through the interactive community survey issued, meetings with the SEC committee, energy audits of commercial buildings and finally the launch of the report at its conclusion.

This report includes recommendations, demonstrating examples of what the community can do to change behaviour and increase the understanding of climate action and how those involved can contribute toward this shared objective of reducing their impact on the environment.

The EMP covers 20 Small Area Plans ¹ which are defined by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and are shown below in Figure 1.

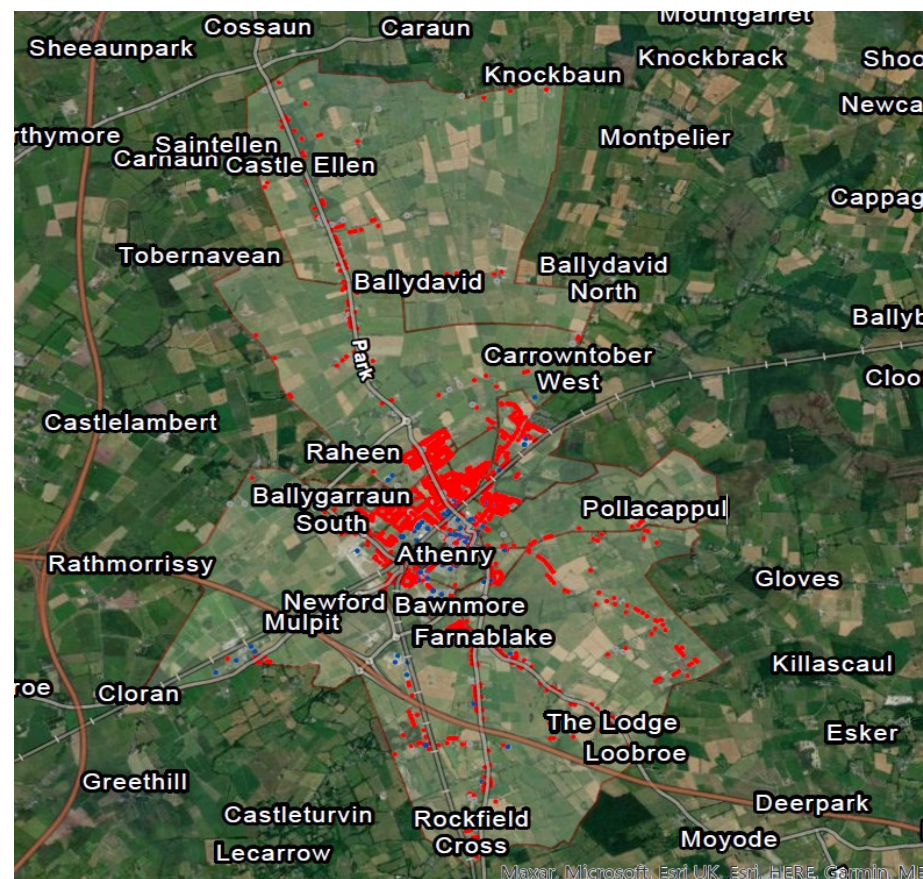


Figure 1 - The image depicts the area covered by Athenry SEC. This was generated using the Small Areas as defined by the Central Statistics Office (CSO SAPMAP 2016).




¹Small Areas are areas of population generally comprising between 80 and 120 dwellings created by The National Institute of Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) on behalf of the Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) in consultation with CSO. Small Areas were designed as the lowest level of geography for the compilation of statistics in line with data protection and generally comprise either complete or part of townlands or neighborhoods. There is a constraint on Small Areas that they must nest within Electoral Division boundaries.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Executive Summary

The table below provides a holistic overview of the energy consumption, emissions and cost associated with Athenry SEC.

Table 2 – SEC Total Energy, CO₂ and Cost Analysis

				
	ELECTRICITY	FOSSIL FUELS	TRANSPORT	TOTAL
ENERGY MWh	26,847	37,483	20,421	84,751
CO ₂ EMISSIONS tCO ₂	9,859	9,189	4,816	23,864
TOTAL ENERGY COST	€4,506,650	€5,242,059	€3,857,183	€13,605,892

As already mentioned, the EMP breaks down the energy consumption and fuel mix within the community's catchment area into 3 key sectors consisting of:

- 1) Residential
- 2) Non-Residential
- 3) Transport

The sectoral baseline energy usage analysis, which will be discussed in more detail in later sections, is summarized in Table 3 in the form of an energy balance for the whole catchment area. This provides a full picture of how much energy is used in each sector, which helps identify and prioritize areas for action by the Athenry SEC.

Table 3 – Sectoral percentage energy consumption

Athenry SEC Primary Energy Baseline (kWh)				
Sector	Electricity	Fossil Fuel	Renewable	Total (MW)
Residential	18,619,381	25,124,908	519,299	44,264
Non-residential	8,228,000	12,358,090		20,586
Transport	29,997	20,390,600		20,421
Total Energy	26,877,378	57,873,598	519,299	85,270

Our analysis of the energy consumption within the catchment area has identified that 52% of the energy demand relates to the residential sector, 24% in the commercial sector and approximately 24% relates to the Transport sector.




		
Residential	Commercial	Transport
52%	24%	24%

Figure 2 – Primary Energy percentage per sector

Residential sector

Background

The Residential sector is one of the largest emitting sectors in Ireland, accounting for 29% of CO₂ emissions and roughly a quarter of the energy used in Ireland as per 2020 estimates from SEAI. Therefore, if communities want to make progress towards individual targets, as well as contributing to the national target of reducing all CO₂ emissions 51% by 2030, it is vital this sector is given particularly close focus.

Whilst energy usage from the residential sector has increased by almost 19% from 2014 to 2020, emissions only subsequently increased by 1%. These figures can be explained by higher household incomes and expenditure which led to higher energy usage but have been balanced out by improvements in energy efficiency as a result of updated building regulations and homeowners increasingly more willing to invest in fabric upgrades within their homes.

The momentum within the country has been to ensure that as many homes as possible upgrade their homes insulation ahead of 2030, with the Irish Government setting the ambitious target of 'retrofitting' 500,000 homes to a B2 Building Energy Rating (BER) by 2030. By retrofitting homes in a manner that focuses on enhancing their insulation, homeowners don't have to use as much energy on space heating within their home, which will naturally lead to emission reductions within the residential sector.

The residential section of this report will seek to analyse what retrofit measures may be suitable for properties in the Athenry SEC based upon Housing age, occupancy, ownership and type.

Furthermore, the fuels used to heat homes within the Athenry SEC are analysed for their emissions in tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. The fuel mix can have a significant impact on the carbon footprint of a community as each fuel type has its own associated CO₂ output. For example, coal and oil produce approximately 0.4kg and 0.3kg of CO₂ for every kilowatt hour of energy delivered, compared to just over 0.2kg for natural gas.

The BER is based upon the provision of space heating, water heating for domestic purposes, ventilation, and lighting. The BER does not include what are called point load consumption such as plugged-in electrical appliances. An excellent reference which provides a breakdown of all energy used in the home is the "SEAI Energy in the Residential Sector 2018 Report.

A breakdown of the communities BER ratings per Small Area Plan is provided, which helps identify those sectors of the community which require most investment in terms of improving their BER. Given that a BER is a reflection of a home's energy efficiency, a lower BER (e.g. G) will imply that homeowners are using more fuel to heat their homes, which is in direct contradiction with the 2030 target's set by the Government. A communities' BER is also closely linked to social deprivation and fuel poverty.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Given the continued rise in energy costs, a strong BER can alleviate homeowners from fuel poverty and prevent others from going into it.

Method

An analysis of the residential housing stock in the catchment area of Athenry SEC has been carried out based on Central Statistics Office (CSO) data and the Eircode data based provided by ESRI.

The residential housing stock is based on a baseline year of 2016 and a breakdown of the number of residential units which are vacant or classified as holiday homes is derived from the Eircode Database which is based on a baseline year of 2021.

The SEAI Building Energy Rating (BER) Map shown in Figure 8 displays colour coded ‘Small Areas’ of the Athenry SEC. The colour of a given small area represents the BER of the median geo-located dwelling in that small area. The map only contains BER Information at the Small Area level for dwellings that have had a BER completed.

The medians were derived from all geo-located dwellings with a BER in that particular Small Area. For example, Small Areas that are green represent areas with a ‘good’ median BER. Small Areas with dwellings that have a poor median BER are either red or purple. SEAI’s corresponding prices and emission factors as of 2022 were applied to calculate the total spend and CO₂ emissions for various sources of energy and heating.

Results and Analysis

Housing Ownership

Within the catchment area approximately 61.7% of the housing is owner occupied. With a 25.3% outright ownership, this can imply a greater appetite to engage in home retrofits as the occupiers are the decision makers in relation to energy upgrades and have a clear incentive to upgrade.

Equally, for rental properties, it is in landowners’ best interests to upgrade the homes they own with retrofit measures in line with the projected minimum BER increases for rental properties that the Government are implementing from 2025.

However, given that landlords themselves will not reap the benefits of a warmer home and cheaper energy bills, a strong strategy of engagement and encouragement will be required for landlords until obligatory measures come into effect.

Table 4 – Percentage of homes owned outright by owner

Occupancy type	No. of homes	% of homes
Owned with mortgage or loan	676	36.4%
Owned outright	470	25.3%
Rented from private landlord	455	24.5%
Rented from Local Authority	164	8.8%
Rented from voluntary/co-operative housing body	16	0.9%
Occupied free of rent	33	1.8%
Not stated	42	2.3%
Total	1829	100%

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Housing Type

A very significant percentage of the housing stock in the catchment is classified as individual houses consisting of detached, semi-detached, terrace housing with a small percentage classified as flats or apartments. Flats and apartments mainly consist of smaller developments or over the shop dwellings. This again is a positive sign for Athenry SEC, as the options for retrofitting a home increase with detached, semi-detached and terraced housing as there is less chance of interfering with other properties.

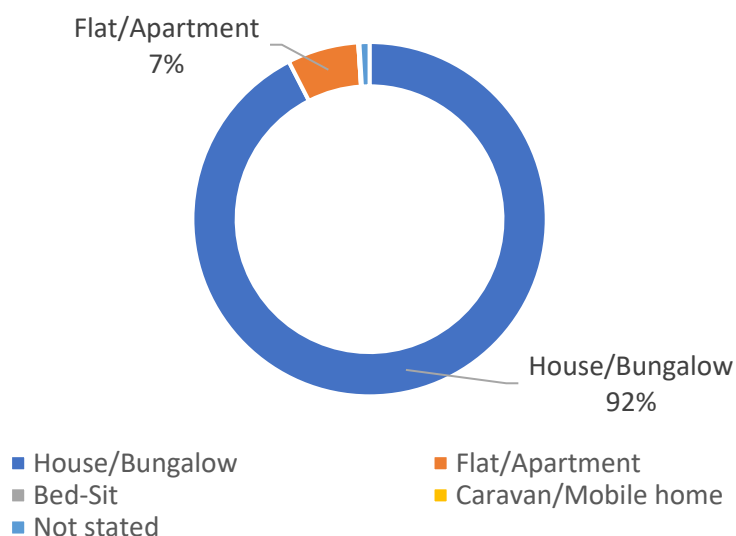


Figure 3 - Housing Stock percentage type

Housing Age

Figure 4 illustrates the age spread of the residential housing stock in the catchment area. The age of the properties is displayed alongside a breakdown of the introduction of the buildings regulations which have had an incremental impact on the construction methodologies used. This information can be quite informative as it illustrates the type of interventions which may be suitable for the housing stock.

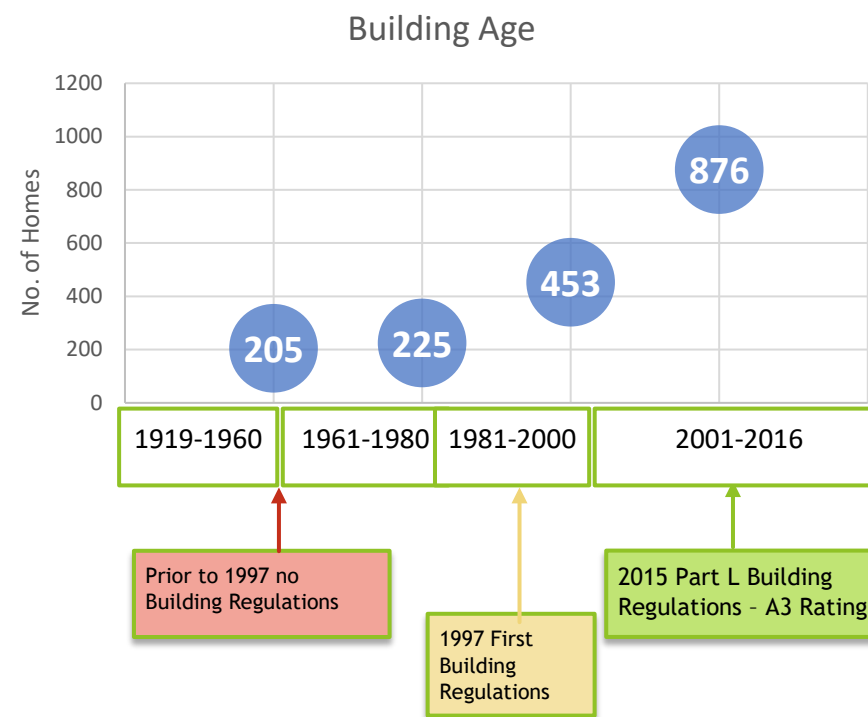


Figure 4 - Relationship between Dwelling Age and Irish Building Regulations

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Within the catchment area there is a good mix of housing age types which will each require different energy efficiency measures to achieve a more energy efficient housing stock. 47.2% of Athenry's housing stock would be considered modern having been constructed after the year 2000, which indicates that measures such as cavity insulation improvements and attic insulation can be promoted.

Housing which was constructed prior to the introduction of the building regulations tended to be solid wall or hollow block construction which is unsuitable for cavity insulation due to the lack of a suitable cavity. These buildings tend to be more suited to internal or external insulation measures².

With 30.3% of dwellings having been constructed from pre 1919 – 1990, this strongly indicates that a relatively manageable number of homes will require major changes to improve energy efficiency and reduce their energy requirements. However, the types of buildings within lower age bands present many challenges due to the historic construction methods applied from their era and the materials used, alongside the important significance associated with preserving the heritage of these homes.

Table 5 – Age profile of the Athenry SEC housing stock

Period	No. of homes	% of homes
Pre 1919	61	3.3%
1919 - 1945	71	3.8%
1946 - 1960	73	3.9%
1961 - 1970	53	2.9%
1971 - 1980	172	9.3%
1981 - 1990	133	7.2%
1991 - 2000	320	17.2%
2001 - 2010	840	45.3%
2011 or later	36	1.9%
Not stated	97	5.2%
Total	1856	100%

² External Wall insulation involves fixing insulation materials such as mineral wool or expanded polystyrene slabs to the outer surface of the wall. The insulation is then covered with a special render to provide weather resistance. A steel or fiber-glass mesh is embedded in this render to provide strength and impact resistance.

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Housing Fuel Mix

The residential fuel mix as illustrated in Figure 5 provides a breakdown of the different types of fuel sources used in the community for the heating of residential properties. The CO₂ Emissions associated with Athenry SEC is linked to the type of fuel consumed within the community. Through using different fuel types, a community can significantly reduce the CO₂ footprint from the energy it consumes to heat its homes. The ideal situation for any community is to reduce the level of energy required to heat their homes through energy efficiency measures and to provide the remaining heat requirements from low or natural CO₂ producing fuel sources.

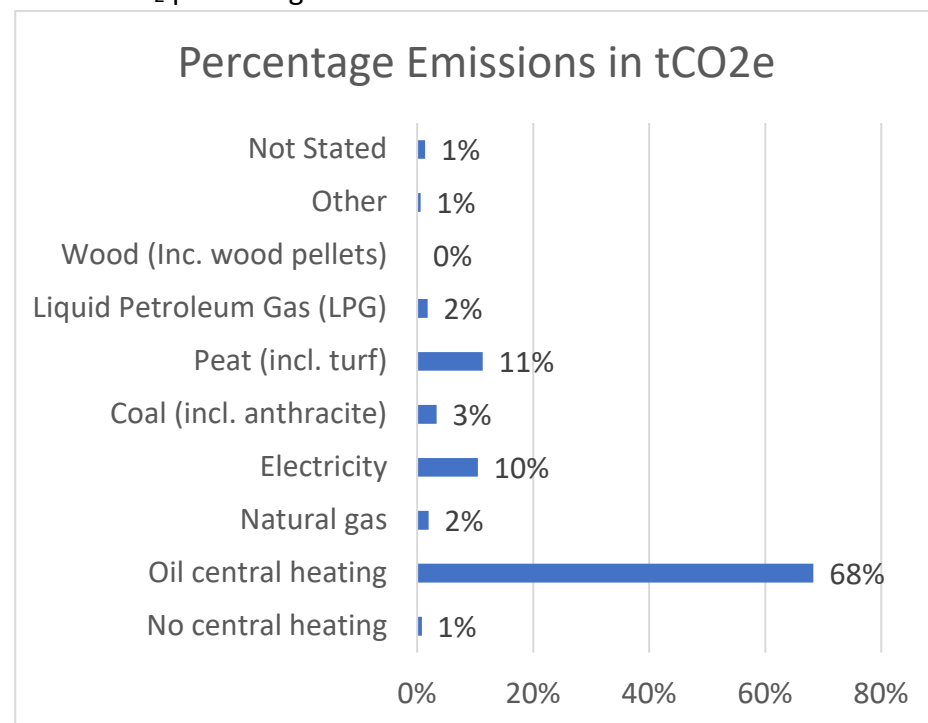


Figure 5 - Percentage emissions in tCO₂e

Within Athenry SEC, the main fuel types currently are oil, peat and electricity which make up 89% of the total thermal energy and CO₂ emissions from the Residential sector. Whilst these findings do raise cause for concern, it also demonstrates the huge level of potential for the community to significantly reduce its carbon footprint.

Table 6 - Residential Fuel Mix

Heating Type	No. of Units	Fuel	% of Total Thermal Energy	Thermal TFC (kWh)	Emissions tCO ₂ e
No central heating	15	Oil	1%	208,275	55.0
Oil central heating	1295	Oil	70%	17,981,075	4745.2
Natural gas	49	Natural Gas	3%	680,365	137.6
Electricity	177	Electricity	10%	2,457,645	727.0
Coal (incl. anthracite)	49	Coal	3%	680,365	231.7
Peat (incl. turf)	159	Peat	9%	2,207,715	785.7
Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG)	39	LPG	2%	541,515	124.2
Wood (Inc. wood pellets)	34	Wood Pellets	2%	472,090	0.0
Other	12	Other	1%	166,620	42.8
Not Stated	27	Other	1%	374,895	96.3
Totals	1856				6,946

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Housing BER Coverage

An analysis of the Building Energy Rating (BER) of the current residential housing stock within the catchment area was carried out. The average BER rating has been determined, however this figure is based upon a limited number of buildings which have had BER's carried out on them and should be reviewed in that context. By analysing the BER data files for all the small areas in the Athenry SEC region, the following information was observed:

Of the 1,856 homes registered within the heatmap catchment of the Athenry SEC region, a commendable 39% of these homes have Building Energy Rating certificates. The number of dwellings in Athenry with a BER of B or better is lower than the national average (6% vs 11%) and also has a weaker BER compared to the national average (D1 vs C2).

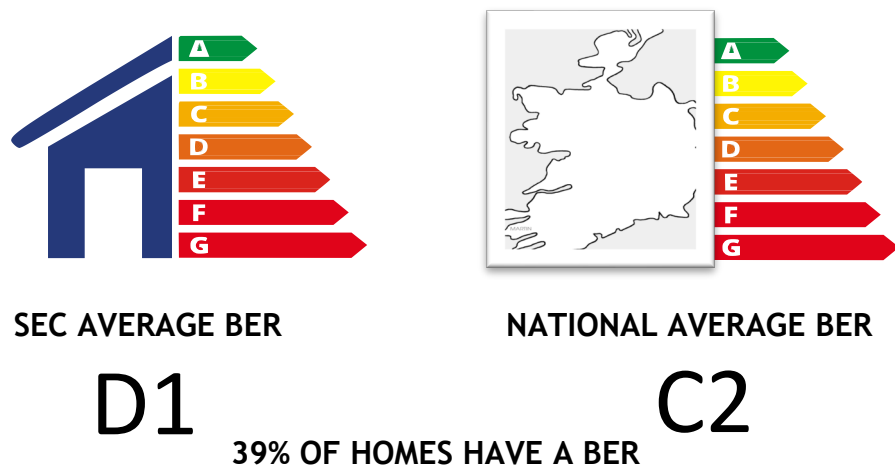


Figure 6 - Building Energy Rating information on catchment

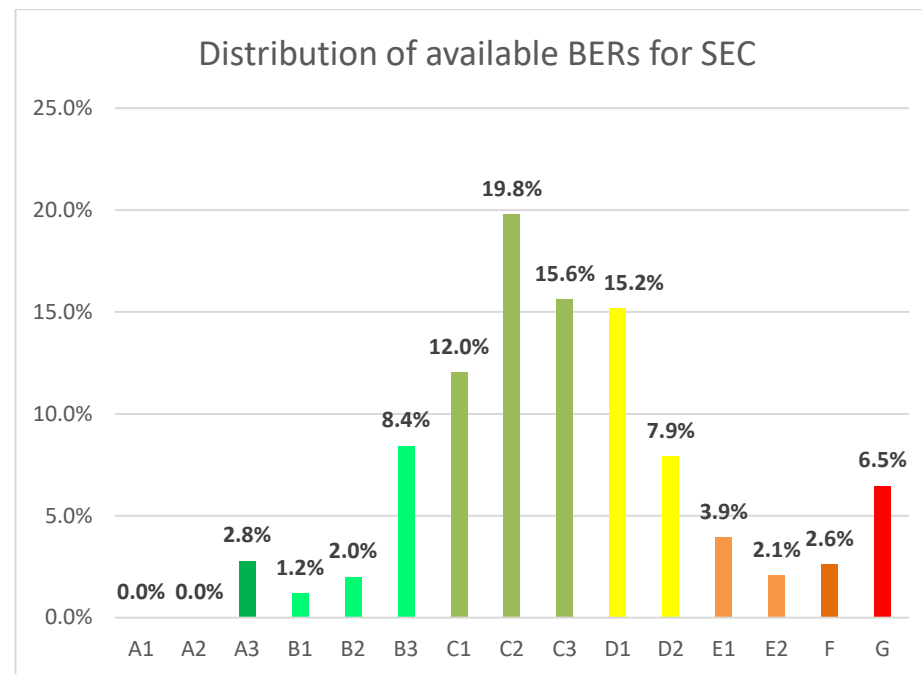


Figure 7 – Distribution of available BERs for Athenry SEC

The chart above indicates that Building Energy Ratings for a large volume of Athenry SEC's residential building stock ranges from a C1 to an D2, 70.5% collectively, with such dwellings requiring between 150-300 kWh/m²/yr. of energy.

The chart above indicates that 94% of the housing stock in the Athenry SEC are below the Irish Government's target BER B2. However, of that total, approximately 55.8% lies within a boundary of B3 – C3 which shows that a significant chunk of the housing stock can be brought up to this rating without deeply extensive retrofitting measures.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

It’s interesting for SECs to see how each subsection of their community fares in terms of BERs. This can reveal insights into fuel poverty and nudges decision makers towards those areas in need of most investment. The map below of the Athenry SEC illustrates the median BER’s which have been recorded in each Small Area Plan.

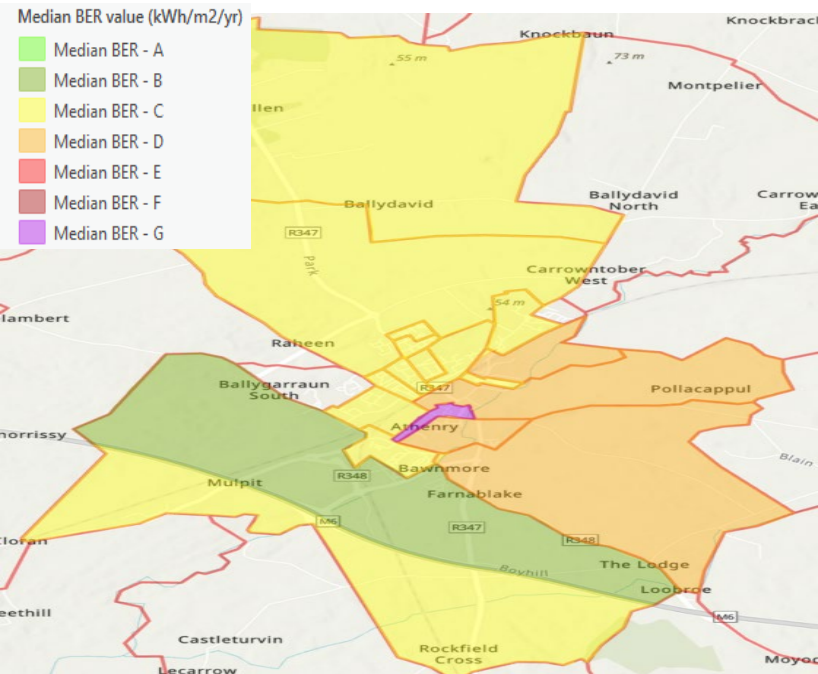


Figure 8 - Map of Median BER in SEC Catchment Area

It should be noted that this information is based on a limited number of BER data and presented for illustrative purposes so to allow for comparison in future reports.

³ This table refers to the SEC’s Total primary energy requirement (TPER). TPER is a measure of your energy consumption that also accounts for the energy that is consumed and/or lost beyond the boundary of the SEC, notably in generating and distributing the electricity that you use.

Residential Energy Baseline

To calculate the residential sector’s energy baseline, national residential data was obtained from the Central Statistics office (CSO), the CSO’s Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS), listed the housing stock present in the area by house type and year of construction.

Table 7 - Residential Energy, CO₂ and Spend ³

	Electricity	Fossil Fuel	Renewable	Total
Total Primary Energy (kWh)	18,619,381	25,124,908	519,299	44,263,587
Total CO ₂ (tonnes)	5,508	6,840	0	12,348
Total Spend (€)	€2,556,614	€3,338,913	€44,849	€5,940,376

For homeowners who wish to upgrade their BER’s, The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) provides financial incentives to homeowners in the form of grants and supports, details of which can be found in the Appendices. It’s important that homeowners are supported throughout the application process, so that they are investing in measures that are appropriate for their home. Whilst the costs of many of the retrofit measures associated with improving a home’s energy efficiency may appear prohibitive on the surface for both lower income groups and landlords alike, SEAI’s new ‘National Retrofitting Scheme’⁴ has meant home upgrades are more achievable for homeowners than ever before.

⁴ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/government-launches-the-national-retrofitting-scheme/>

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For example, homeowners can now avail of grants equivalent to 80% of the typical cost for attic and cavity wall insulation, with an upper limit of €2,500. These measures have been shown to improve energy efficiency significantly within typical Irish homes and should be an affordable measure for the majority of homeowners in Athenry SEC.

Furthermore, the Warmer Homes Scheme ⁵ offers free energy upgrades for eligible homeowners who are most at risk of energy poverty. A budget allocation of €109 million has been provided for this scheme this year. The scheme will target the least energy efficient properties, by prioritising homes that were built and occupied before 1993 and have a pre-works BER of E, F or G. Applications will also be accepted from qualifying homeowners who previously received supports under the scheme, but who could still benefit from even deeper measures.

Given that energy costs are expected to remain at the very least the same level in the coming years, if not increase further, it is vital that homeowners in lower income groups utilise these grant streams to protect themselves against falling into, or further into fuel poverty.

****Please see the Appendix Section for a Summary of these grants****

⁵ <https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-energy-grants/free-upgrades-for-eligible-homes/>

Retrofit Case Studies

Background

The momentum within the country has been to upgrade the fabric of buildings so that heat pumps can be utilised as the primary heating source. However, in order for heat pumps to be a viable option, buildings need to be insulated to a level where they have a Heat Loss indicator of 2.0 or less. SEAI define these dwellings as being 'heat pump ready' ⁶. If properties are not insulated to an adequately high level, then this technology is not suitable as a primary heat source.

The government's climate action plan has set a Building Energy Rating (BER) of B2 as the target for the energy performance of retrofitted homes. This target is in line with current building regulations - 'Part L conservation of fuel and energy' ⁷, which specifies that buildings undergoing 'Major Renovations' ⁸ must achieve a BER B2 or 'Cost Optimal' level of energy performance.

Method

As part of the Energy Master Plan 8 residential properties were selected within the community for energy assessments using the Building Energy Rating system.

⁶ Heat Loss Indicator (HLI) value is the total heat loss per m2 of dwelling floor area. A minimum HLI of 2 Watts/Kelvin/m2 must be achieved to be suitable for a heat pump however in some cases, where upgrades may not be cost- optimal, a value of HLI up to 2.3 Watts/Kelvin/m2 can be accepted provided additional requirements are met

The audits were carried out in September 2022. In conjunction with the Building Energy Rating, an uplift report was produced for each property indicating the works which would provide an increase in the energy rating of the building up to at least A3. The individual building information has been redacted from the following case studies for the privacy of the homeowners. The following table illustrates the spread of buildings which were reviewed.

Table 8 – Residential Building Energy Rating and possible uplift

Building No.	Building Size m2	Existing BER Rating	Measures No.	Possible BER Uplift
1	89	C3	9	A2
2	183	B2	7	A1
3	150	C1	8	A1
4	153	F	8	A2
5	239	C1	8	A2
6	151	B1	7	A1
7	115	C3	8	A1
8	118	C2	8	A1

Below is an example of one of a typical BER Audit report. The rest can be found in the supplementary Appendix section of the Energy Master Plan.

⁷ <https://assets.gov.ie/180475/e532a9c5-3ec6-4a4c-8309-02f8a653e2d8.pdf>

⁸Major renovations refer to upgrades where more than 25% of the building envelope. Painting, re-plastering, rendering, re-slating, re-tiling, cavity wall insulation and insulation of ceiling are not considered major renovation works.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Dwelling Type

Storey with lower ground floor with 4 Bedrooms and 2 Living rooms- Detached Dwelling

M2

D1

Total Building Area:

229

Element	BER Rating	Energy Value (kWh/m2/yr)	Co2 Emissions (kgCO2/m2/yr)	Energy Savings	Total Annual Space Heating (kWh/yr)	Space Heating in Kw/hour	Heat Loss Indicator (HLI) w/km2	Space Heating costs per year	Carbon Emissions
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Dwelling Current Condition D1 237.31 59.31 - 39,094 20.36 2.79 €4,691.28 13,581

Element	BER Rating	Energy Value (kWh/m2/yr)	Co2 Emissions (kgCO2/m2/yr)	% Energy Saving	Total Annual Space Heating (kWh/yr)	Energy Requirement per hour for space Heating (Kwh/Hour)	Heat Loss Indicator (HLI)	Space Heating Cost per year (€)	Overall Carbon Emission KgCO2/Year
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1	Ventilation	Instal mechanical extract ventilation system to dwelling :example https://www.vent-axia.com/range/centralised-mechanical-extract-ventilation-mev	D1	239.54	59.88	-0.94%	36,565	19.04	2.82	€4,387.80	13,712
2	Roof Insulation	Add 200mm quilt insulation to existing 100mm quilt insulation laid perpendicular to existing U Value 0.13 w/m2k	D1	226.25	56.45	4.66%	36,797	19.17	2.65	€4,415.64	12,926
3	External Walls	Full fill bonded bead added to existing partially filled cavity walls with Kore silver bead or equal. U Value 0.37 w/m2k Semi exposed walls in lower ground floor fitted with 100mm PIR u Value 0.27 w/m2k	C3	205.33	51.06	8.82%	32,442	16.90	2.39	€3,893.04	11,692
4	Windows and Doors	Fit new energyefficient windows and doors throughout to U Value 1.20 w/m2k or better - Windows and doors to conservatory to stay in place.	C2	186.73	46.27	7.84%	28,571	14.88	2.09	€3,428.52	10,595
5	Chimneys	Block up 2 chimneys in dwelling and remove open fires.	C2	180.12	43.21	10.62%	27,195	14.16	2.06	€3,263.40	9,895
6	Airtightness	Improve Air permeability to approximately 7 m3/m2/hr by getting air test done and addressing all leakage areas and re test.	C1	175.16	41.97	2.09%	26,162	13.63	2.00	€3,139.44	9,611
7	New Boiler and controls	Fit new oil fired condensing boiler (efficiency 95%) and time and temperature zone control (2 no space heating zones and separate hot water zone)	B1	99.44	23.84	31.91%	14,723	7.67	2.00	€1,766.76	5,459
8	Air Source Heat Pump	*Install an Air to Water Heat Pump (Mitsubishi 10.0 Kw unit used in this assesment) with time and temperature zone control in place of existing Storage Radiators.	A3	51.11	10.05	52.27%	3,556	1.85	2.00	€782.32	2,301
9	Photovoltaic	Add 8 No. PV Panels to South facing roof 2.47Kwp (assuming 360 watts per panel)	A2	28.67	5.64	9.46%	3,556	1.85	2.00	€782.32	1,292

* The Heat pump used in this Assessment is a Mitsubishi 10.0 Kw - The Heap Pump installed MUST be specified by the Installer and/or Manufacturer.

A2
Carbon Dioxide
Savings per year -
Tonnes 12.29

Energy in Transport

Background

Transport in Ireland is currently deeply dependent on imported fossil fuels. Emissions from transport fuelled by fossil fuels were by far the largest source of energy-related CO₂ in 2020, being responsible for 40% of the total and is the only sector where CO₂ emissions have grown since the end of the recession in 2012. Road transport specifically accounts for 96% of all greenhouse gases associated with transport, so a modal shift is critical.

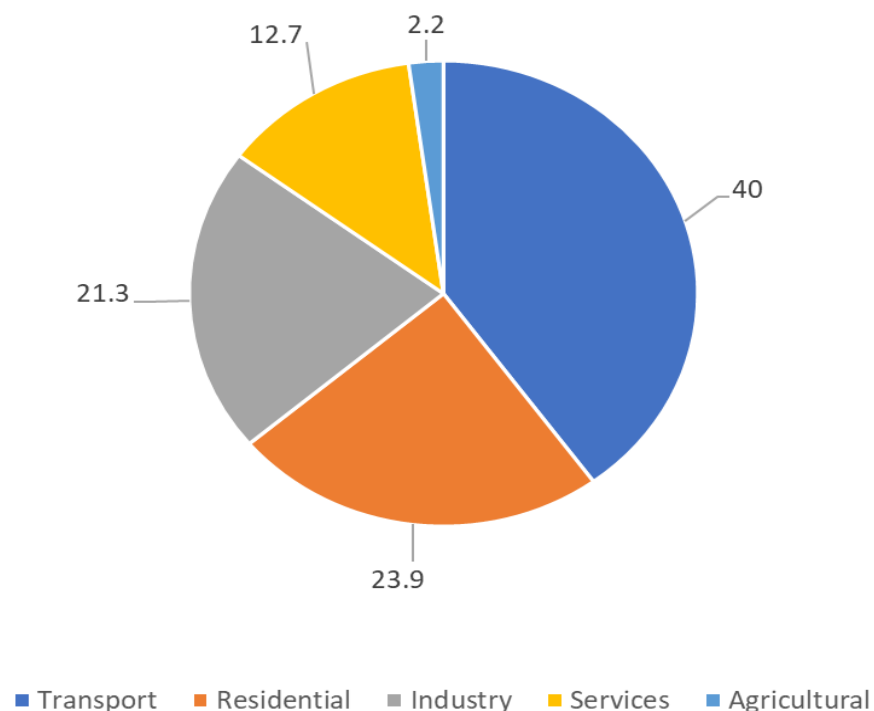


Figure 9– Percentage share of Energy Related CO₂ by sector for 2020 in Ireland

Whilst it's important to note that Figure 9 doesn't account for overall greenhouse gas emissions for each sector, it is reflective of the work needed to reduce Transport emissions. The Climate Action Plan stipulates that there must be a 42-50% reduction in emissions from the transport sector by 2030 if Ireland is to meet its Climate targets.

In order to achieve these emission reductions, it's clear that a transition towards more sustainable forms of transport is required. To realise this transition, many forms of transport options must be maintained, planned, and provided for the region. This ranges from safe and accessible walking and cycle routes to appropriate public transport links serving the needs of the residents, to the implementation of appropriate infrastructure to support the electrification of private car and fleet vehicles.

The standout targets for the Transport sector as part of the Climate Action Plan are to:

- Provide an additional 500,000 daily public and active transport journeys
- Electrify 845,000 passenger cars
- Electrify mass transportation with up to 1,500 Electric Buses

This will necessitate a change in the traditional 'road hierarchy' which has dominated Irish roads for years, starting with active travel and then public transport being encourage over the private car.

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Ireland's rapidly growing economy in recent years has brought with it urban sprawl and low-density development which has locked in unsustainable travel patterns and a reliance on private cars bringing with it entrenched behavioural patterns that will not be a challenge to overcome.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the introduction of severe travel restrictions and greater remote working practices, is estimated to have resulted in a reduction of approximately 16% of transport emissions (excluding aviation) in 2020 compared to 2019 levels. The pandemic has shown that large scale behaviour change is achievable and that new patterns of mobility and working can play a part in the transition to a more sustainable transport system.

Method

An analysis of the means of transport for workers and students as well as the transport fuel mix in the catchment area of Athenry SEC has been carried out based on data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO). SEAI's corresponding energy usage, prices and emission factors for various forms of transport as of 2020 were applied to calculate the total spend and CO₂ emissions for various sources of fuel for vehicles in the catchment area.

Results and Analysis

Commuting to work

Commuting to work by private car is the primary method of transport in the Athenry SEC with 73.3% of workers either driving or being driven by car.

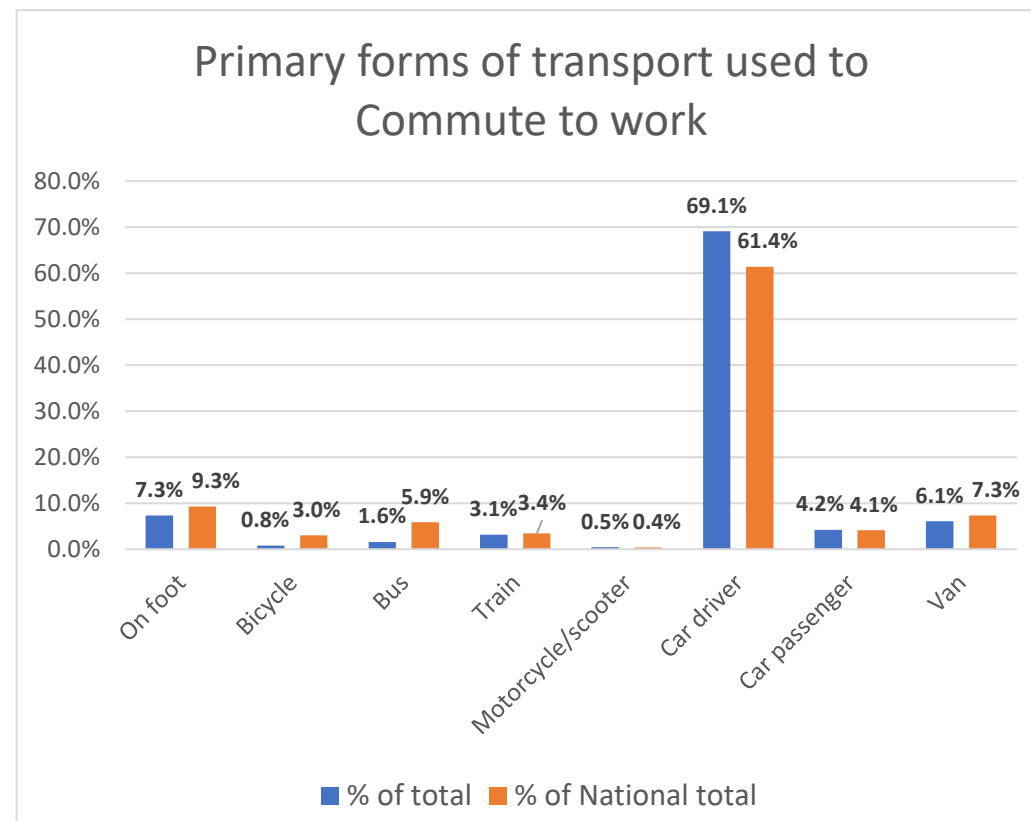


Figure 10 – Primary forms of transport used to commute to work

Athenry lags behind national averages in public transport usage for commuting to work. To tackle these low levels and shift more commuters away from driving traditional fossil fueled cars, the SEC could try to encourage those commuters who travel within a 15km radius of the town to utilize the bus services to the surrounding area. The SEC could attract more of its residents to use public transport by highlighting the [20% decrease in selected public transport services](#) announced from April 2022 onwards.

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The SEC should try and promote public transport services that run routes from Athenry to Galway as much as possible. Iarnrod Eireann runs 17 return journeys Monday-Friday, with a journey time almost identical to taking a car. Additionally, Farrell's coaches Athenry to Galway route also operates up to 11 services across at its peak, so there is no shortage of options for those commuting to Galway for work or leisure.

On a more local level, services such as LocalLink operate services to isolated and vulnerable people within the community, as well as offering an alternative means of transport within the region⁹. It is noted in feedback from local representatives that LocalLink could be better established within the town and that there is significant potential to build on the existing connections between towns and villages. The SEC along with other local groups could try to bring this to LocalLinks attention by proving there is a demand for the service.

Sustainable transport is among the greatest challenges for suburban regions, particularly in an area like Athenry which has grown as a result of being within driving distance of Galway City. Until there is more of a regional balance in terms of industry and commercial activity, active transport commutes to work are likely to remain relatively low for the foreseeable future in Athenry.

Reducing car journeys through remote working

The impact of COVID-19 on the nature of transport in Athenry cannot be understated and the profile will have changed significantly in the last two years, with a greater shift to home-based working and education, thus leading to a reduction in car usage.

⁹ <https://www.locallinkgalway.ie/timetables>

The CSO have released information compiled during the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2020 (as part of the Q2 Labour Force Survey) out of 47% of the population who had their employment impacted by COVID-19, just over a third (34%) started working from home. A more recent CSO study indicated that 80% of those in employment have worked remotely at some point since the start of the pandemic.

The recent enforced changes have created a national experiment in the concept of hybrid or remote working models which in many cases have been seen as being successful. Many office-based jobs can be based partly or on a full-time basis at home or within remote office hubs within the community. A reduction of 40% in work associated commutes could be achieved by working remotely 2 days a week, which would mean significant progress in reducing transport emissions by 42-50%.

Athenry SEC could explore the potential for smart remote working hubs within existing community building infrastructure or as additions onto community buildings with childcare and after school facilities. It can also be used as an opportunity to give derelict buildings within the community a new lease of life. The Building Block¹⁰ in Sligo town is an excellent example of this, which is a shared working space that prior to its development in 2017, had been unused for 10 years. Key elements which will be required to make this successful are comfortable buildings with high-speed broadband and shared canteen facilities. Further grant funding for community hubs was recently announced in through the [Town and Village Renewal Scheme](#) which the SEC should look in to.

¹⁰ <https://tinyurl.com/9d756vrX>

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

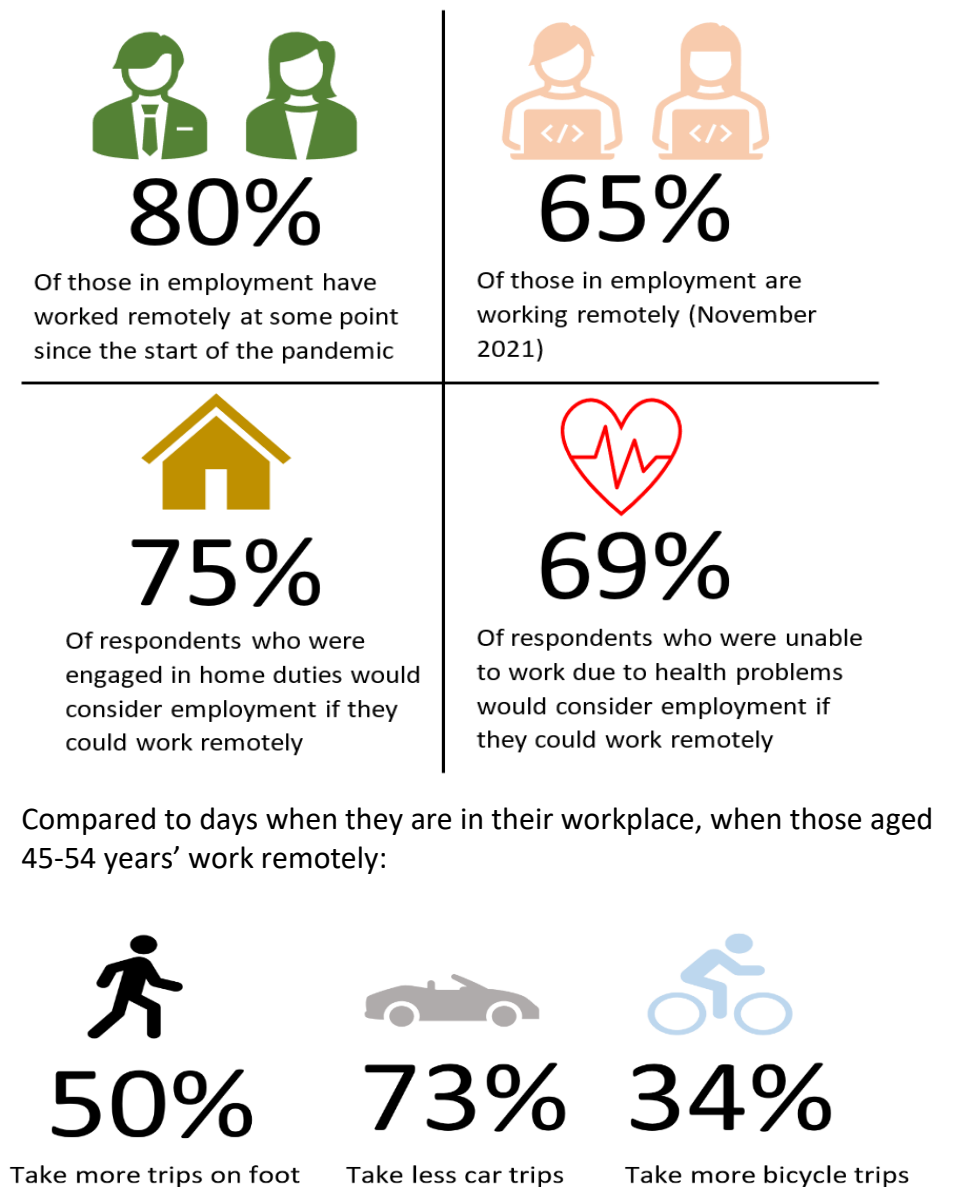


Figure 11 – Results from the CSO 'Our Lives Online: Remote Work' survey from November 2021

Commuting to school or college

The outcome is similar for students commuting to primary, secondary and college education. Naturally we would expect the car to dominate the uptake for primary school children, so this slightly skews the results. However, there is still a lower usage of public transport amongst the student population in the community, with the Athenry SEC's usage over 33% lower than the national average.

This may be seen as a cause for concern but could also be viewed as a significant opportunity, as the community could try to address this by lobbying their local councilors and TDs if they can prove there is demand for the service.

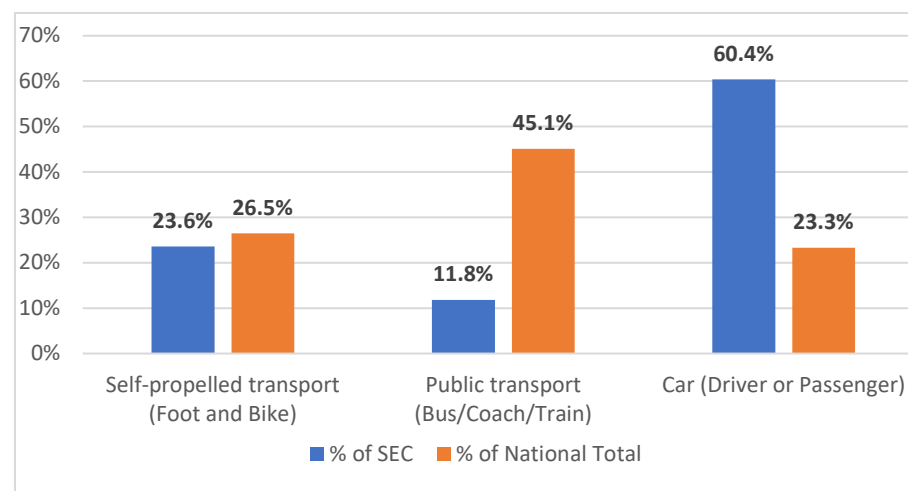


Figure 12 – Primary forms of transport for primary, secondary and college students

Athenry has a respectable level of students who either walk or cycle to school, sitting less than 3% below the national average. To increase this rate, the SEC could look to seek funding or grants in order to improve the active travel infrastructure in their community so that walkways and cycle paths are safer for students.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

For example, The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme launched in March 2021 and was open to all schools in Ireland to apply for active travel funding and delivery. Over €15 million was provided in Round 1 of funding to accelerate the delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure on key access routes to schools and on school grounds. Athenry Boys National School were actually one of the schools selected in first round of the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme 2021. It is encouraging for other schools in the community that there exists a successful case study of a school that has received funding.¹¹

Often times, one of parent's primary concerns about their children using active transport to go to school is their safety when going out alone. One way to combat this is through a 'Cycle Bus'. A Cycle Bus is where students cycle along a designated route to school with parents accompanying them.

It is a parent/guardian/community-led initiative whereby several parents and volunteers lead groups of cycling students to one or more schools. Cycle Buses have a specific route with stops along the way where students can join. Whilst this began as in cities, it has since spread to smaller towns such as Skibbereen, Strandhill and Cootehill. Previously this was in place in Athenry in 2021 and is due to recommence in 2023 under the stewardship of the 'Wheels of Athenry' volunteer group.

¹¹ <https://www.galwaydaily.com/news/11-galway-schools-to-receive-funding-for-better-walking-and-cycling-routes/>

Similar initiatives have popped up over the country, except rather than cycling, parents' guide children by foot in what is known as a 'Walking Bus'.

Energy consumption from transport

An analysis of transport related energy consumption was carried out for the Athenry SEC catchment areas. The analysis was based upon a statistical analysis of vehicle ownership in the catchment area along with the types of vehicles used and their associated carbon emissions.¹² As already referenced, the Census data shows that the majority of commutes within the Athenry SEC catchment area are by car or van.

Table 9 – Means of commuting in the SEC

Commuting to work	No. of people	% of total
On foot	162	7.3%
Bicycle	18	0.8%
Bus	35	1.6%
Train	69	3.1%
Motorcycle/scooter	10	0.5%
Car driver	1523	69.1%
Car passenger	93	4.2%
Van	134	6.1%
Other	6	0.3%
Work from home	81	3.7%
Not stated	74	3.4%
Total	2205	100%

¹² The renewable portion of the fuels has been taken as follows: renewable content of electricity consumed (40% in 2020), 5% of petrol consumption and 7% of diesel consumption (as per the Biofuels Obligation Scheme).

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Based on the information on vehicle ownership within the catchment area, it is possible to calculate the energy consumption and carbon footprint for the transport sector. A national stock breakdown has been used to calculate energy consumption and emissions (56.9% diesel, 42.7% petrol, 0.4% Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV)) based on national average km travelled.

Table 10 – Private Vehicle Transport Energy and CO₂ impacts

		National average annual km	kWh/km (TPER)	gCO ₂ /km
	Petrol	12,113	0.73	167
Car	Diesel	19,681	0.70	167
	BEV	12,958	0.38	65
Motorcycle		2,741	0.41	94
Van		19,787	1.01	243
Truck		44,671	3.47	832

Based on this information and values, a conservative estimate of energy used in transport is shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11 - SEC Transport Energy, CO₂ and Spend

	Electricity	Fossil Fuel	Renewable	Total
Total Primary Energy (kWh)	29,997	19,067,124	1,323,476	20,420,598
Total CO ₂ (tonnes)	5	4,813	0	4,818
Total Spend (€)	€5,669	€3,851,513	€250,137	€4,107,320

Switch to electrical vehicles

An analysis of the impact of changing 40% of the existing private vehicle fleet to battery electric vehicles is detailed in the table opposite. It indicates that a CO₂ reduction of 1232 tonnes and a reduction in energy spend of approximately € 564,750 per annum.

These are savings which can be recirculated around in the local economy, creating a more economically sustainable community. If the Athenry SEC is struggling to avoid using cars or shift its residents to active or public transport, then a transition to electric vehicles shows that it can have a significant impact on reducing emissions, showing alignment with the Climate Action Plan's targets

Table 12 - SEC Transport Energy, CO₂ and Spend with 40% Electric Vehicles

	Electricity	Fossil Fuel	Renewable	Total
Total Primary Energy (kWh)	2,999,725	12,193,272	1,040,852	16,233,849
Total CO ₂ (tonnes)	513	3,073	0	3,586
Total Spend (€)	€566,948	€2,461,521	€196,721	€3,225,190

A significant increase in the availability of long-range electrical vehicles (EV) has made this mode of transport more suitable for rural environments. Electric vehicles will become the dominant mode of privately owner vehicles in the coming decade.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

The key benefit for the user is the reduced operational costs associated with fuel to power the car. The following fuel costs for the EV are based upon home charging with night rate electricity in 2020.¹³

Table 13 - Comparison of CO₂ impacts and fuel costs based on 250km per week

Vehicle	Weekly fuel cost	Weekly gCO ₂
Electric e.g. Nissan LEAF	€2.54	13,800
Petrol equivalent	€21.60	27,200
Diesel equivalent	€15.74	21,800

The Athenry SEC should consider a public EV awareness event to promote the suitability of electrical vehicles for suburban environments. Whilst the one-off purchase cost can be more expensive than a fossil fueled car, electric vehicles are significantly cheaper to run, with SEAI reporting running costs for a diesel car as €1000 more expensive annually than an electric vehicle¹⁴

Although it is a significant investment to purchase an EV, households with 2 vehicles should be encouraged to look at the possibility of having a smaller electric car alongside their first car for shorter journeys as a starting point on the route to electric vehicles.

¹³ <https://www.esb.ie/our-business/ecars/ecars-cost-calculator>

SEAI provides a series of supports to incentivise the transition from fossil fuel-based vehicles towards electrical vehicles, details of which can be found in the Appendices.

Whilst we anticipate the accelerated growth of a ‘second-hand’ market to grow in the next five years, in the short term the Athenry SEC should focus on implementing the ‘Avoid-Shift-Improve’ or ASI model for transport within the community.

Table 14 – Avoid–Shift–Improve Transport model

Pillar	Description	Example
Avoid	Avoid or reduce travel or the need to travel	Transitioning to increased remote working. Walking or cycling where possible
Shift	Shift to more energy efficient modes	Using public transport such as bus services
Improve	Improve efficiency through vehicle technology	Moving towards electric vehicles

¹⁴ <https://www.seai.ie/technologies/electric-vehicles/compare-and-calculate/comparison-results/?vehicle1=8164927&vehicle2=7910676&vehicle3=4147520&vehicle4=4271646>

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Car Sharing/Pooling

Car sharing within a suburban environment can be complex due to the distribution of homes, however many people are likely to be travelling to the same locations on a regular basis, such as on school runs. Car sharing or pooling can reduce the number of vehicle journeys and reduce the cost for both the driver and its occupancy by sharing costs. Additional benefits include reduced driving and car maintenance costs as well as being very suitable for longer distance daily commutes.

It's worth noting that other towns across Ireland have begun to promote the use of car sharing apps. For example, Mullingar is part of a Car sharing app known as 'GoCar'. GoCar are a nationwide car sharing scheme that allows members to book cars online or via their dedicated app for as little as an hour, with rates as low as €10 per hour for use. Currently there is 1 car and 1 van available in Mullingar via GoCar, but similar to other locations around the country this total would likely increase with more usage from the community.

Alternatively, if the SEC wanted to focus on a more community based approach for their car share scheme, they could follow the example of Fingal County Council, who in partnership with Local Link and GoCar have recently launched the pilot ['Community Car'](#) service.

The Community Car service is the first of its kind to be implemented by a local authority in Ireland and is now operational in the Howth and Skerries areas. Two electric Vehicles have been provided for this pilot initiative which recognises Fingal's commitment to Climate Change Action.

The Community Car has been set up to bring people to hospital and health appointments, access pension / banking / shopping services, Local community activities (men's sheds, active retirement groups, local community meetings) etc.

The purpose of the Community Car scheme is to involve volunteers in their local communities, helping community members, through the provision of supported transport. The Volunteer Driver will provide essential door to door transport for passengers identified, who have difficulties accessing public or other forms of transport. Athenry SEC could lobby local link for a similar service in their area given the sometimes underwhelming bus services that the town is currently offered.

Transitioning away from Cars

Car ownership

In order to meet the Transport reduction targets set by the Irish Government, the number of car journeys will need to decrease substantially. Naturally this means moving away from the traditional fossil fuelled car and towards alternative forms of transport that have a lower carbon intensity. Whilst EVs will undoubtedly form part of the solution to reduce emissions from transport, other modes of transport could help alleviate any reliance on EVs.

There are 2,549 cars between the 3,677 people who are legally of age to drive in the Athenry SEC (17 and over). This means there are 693 cars per 1000 adults in Athenry. This doesn't account for those individuals who do not have a driving license, so the number of people who are able to drive them is likely to be lower.

If we assume that all drivers in Athenry operate diesel powered vehicles, then the annual average CO₂ emissions per driver in Athenry is 2.95 tonnes. (Based off the County Galway average annual km driven in 2019 ¹⁵). Given the unpredictable and skewed transport data as a result of COVID-19 over the last two years, it is more beneficial for the SEC to use the conservative estimate of the 2019 data.

¹⁵ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-tranom/transportomnibus2019/roadtrafficvolumes/>

There were 1856 homes in Athenry as per the 2016 census, meaning there are 1.37 cars available for every home in Athenry, with 67.7% of homes owning more than one car. The SEC could appeal to those home owners with more than one car to replace it with an e-bike.

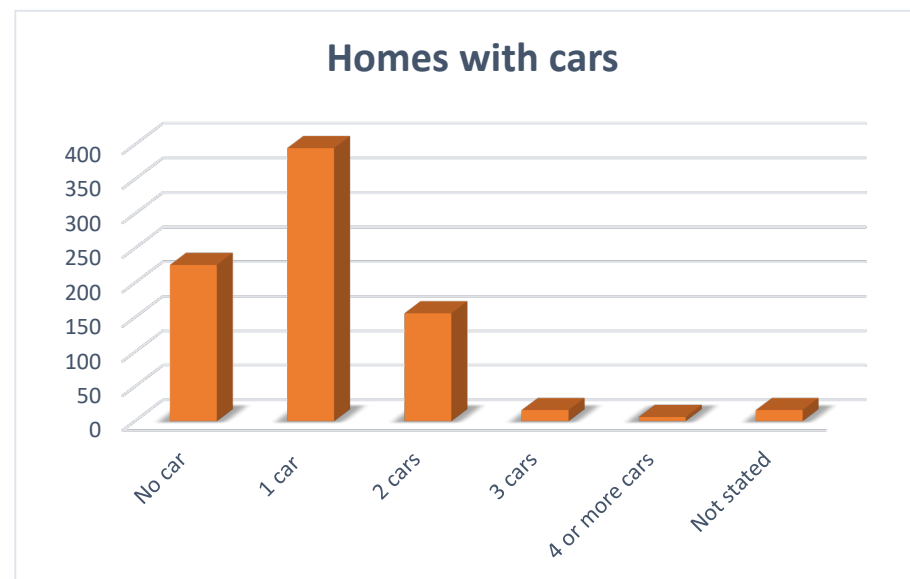


Figure 13 – Bar chart evidencing the number of cars each home in the SEC owns

Whilst estimates for how many grams of CO₂ e-bikes emit per kilometre driven vary widely due to differing methodologies, if a conservative estimate of 10g/CO₂/km was used, this would result in a reduction of 2.79 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually per driver (based on earlier assumption of 2.95 tonnes of CO₂ per driver).

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

If approximately a third of the 2 car households (245 homes) made this swap and we assume that all cars are diesel powered and every car owner was driving the Co Galway average, the SEC would save roughly 722 tonnes of CO₂. For context this equates to 14% of Athenry SEC transport emissions. This may be seen as difficult transition to make, but if we look at the average commute times for work, school and college in Athenry, the commute times lends itself to a reduction in cars given over half of the SECs population have a commute time of under 15 minutes (39.7%).

Of course, it would be presumptuous to read too much into the commute times, particularly for those under 15 minutes as this is likely to be skewed by students attending school. A more detailed transport study which evidences where individuals are going on their commute, along with a breakdown of what mode of transport they use would provide a more reflective outlook of the transport profile in the SEC.

Table 15 – Commute time for residents in the Athenry SEC to education or work

Commuting time	No. of people	% of total
Under 15 mins	514	54.3%
1/4 hour - under 1/2 hour	166	17.5%
1/2 hour - under 3/4 hour	105	11.1%
3/4 hour - under 1 hour	23	2.4%
1 hour - under 1 1/2 hours	46	4.9%
1 1/2 hours and over	23	2.4%
Not stated	69	7.3%
Total	946	100.0%

Commuting and car usage

It is extremely difficult to accurately calculate the mean car mileage for the Athenry SEC. We can see what the average commuting time is for those attending education or going to work, but this doesn't indicate which mode of transport they used on their journey.

There are 2549 cars in circulation within the Athenry SEC. From that total 1523 cars are used for commuting to work, with 46 students commuting to school or college via car, meaning 1569 cars are used to commute for education or work purposes.

This means that there are approximately 980 cars that are not regularly used for commuting purposes, which are more likely to drive a below average amount of distance annually. The SEC could target those individuals who are not commuting for work or education in an effort to encourage them to use alternative means of transport that are less CO₂ intensive.

E-Scooters

Similar to an e-bike, an e-scooter (Electric scooter) is a small platform with two or more wheels that is propelled by an electric motor. Whilst there are a plethora of start-ups seeking to launch e-scooter services in Ireland, e-scooter operators will have to wait until 2023 to get the green light as the Government formally introduces legislation governing their commercial usage next year.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

However, users over 16 are still free to purchase their own e-scooters from retailers without the need for a licence. E-scooters have grown in popularity in recent years, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic where users sought to find alternative means of transport in urban areas.

E-scooters have proven to be particularly popular with younger users, which is a positive for Athenry, where almost 28% of the local population lies between the ages of 16-39 as per the last census results. Athenry SEC should monitor progress on legislation regarding e-scooters, but in the meantime could begin building relationships with private vendors who have announced their intention to enter the market when legislation comes into force, particularly Irish start-ups to allow for a 'boots on the ground' presence for any proposed launch of a scheme.

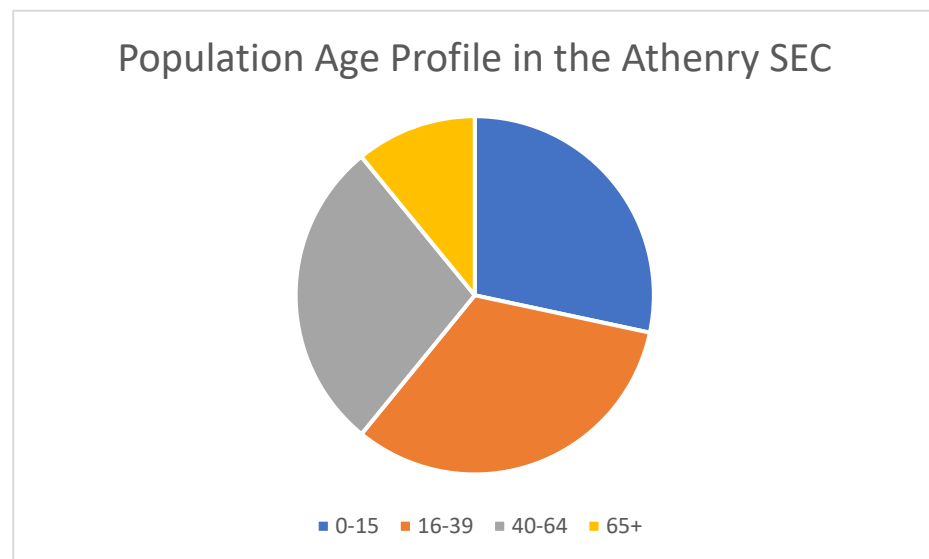


Figure 14 – Pie chart representing the population age breakdown in Athenry

Promotion of public transport services

It is noted in feedback from members of the SEC that the bus network around Athenry is disjointed and lacks regular direct routes to many of the most popular destinations in the surrounding area. To address this, the SEC and other community groups should lobby Galway County Council and/or contact local bus service providers and prove that sufficient demand is there to add more direct and frequent routes.

Ultimately, whilst the census results were recorded in 2016 and the percentage of bus users could have risen, the SEC should try to investigate why the number of bus users is so low.

Whilst it will be difficult for Athenry SEC to have any meaningful impact on the fuel choice used by the likes of Bus Eireann, they can campaign their Local Link services to begin the decarbonisation of the bus fleet. For example, Laois County Council along with TFI Local Link Laois Offaly has [launched its first electric bus](#) that will operate across both counties. Athenry SEC could lobby Galway County Council to replicate this initiative over the coming years and should be able to justify this given the population of Athenry and surrounding towns.

However, a more pressing matter is perhaps the lack of buses serving parts of the SEC, which may help explain why the service is currently so underused within Athenry.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Increasing the rate of cycling

It is noted that the amount of cycling within Athenry makes up a tiny percentage of the journeys taken for education or work purposes, in contrast to the number of individuals who travel by foot.

Whilst it is encouraging for the SEC that they have a higher-than-average amount of residents who walk on their daily commute, to boost active travel numbers further, the lack of cycling within the community should be addressed.

It is understood that Athenry is home to a Cycling group – The Wheels of Athenry who promote cycling within the community. They are a voluntary community advocacy group who promote the joy of cycling for all, the need for safe cycling infrastructure, and accessibility for all in Athenry and the surrounding areas. Their focus is on leisure, utility, and transport cycling as opposed to sport cycling. The group have used their influence to enhance the provision of cycle parking in Athenry, have led the campaign for a connection to the Eurovelo 2 (Dublin - Galway) via a connection to Oranmore and plan to start an Athenry Cycle Bus in 2023 amongst a number of other activities.

Taken (with permission) from the [Athenry Cycle bus Facebook page](#) who pose the question “Five thousand people can hop on their bikes and ten mins later be in the Square. For over 3,500 of them that journey only takes five mins. This begs the question...why aren’t so many more of Athenry’s children cycling to school?” Safety is the primary concern for many with poor cycle infrastructure throughout the town. The Wheels of Athenry cycle group have put in place a number of projects to improve this and support active travel.

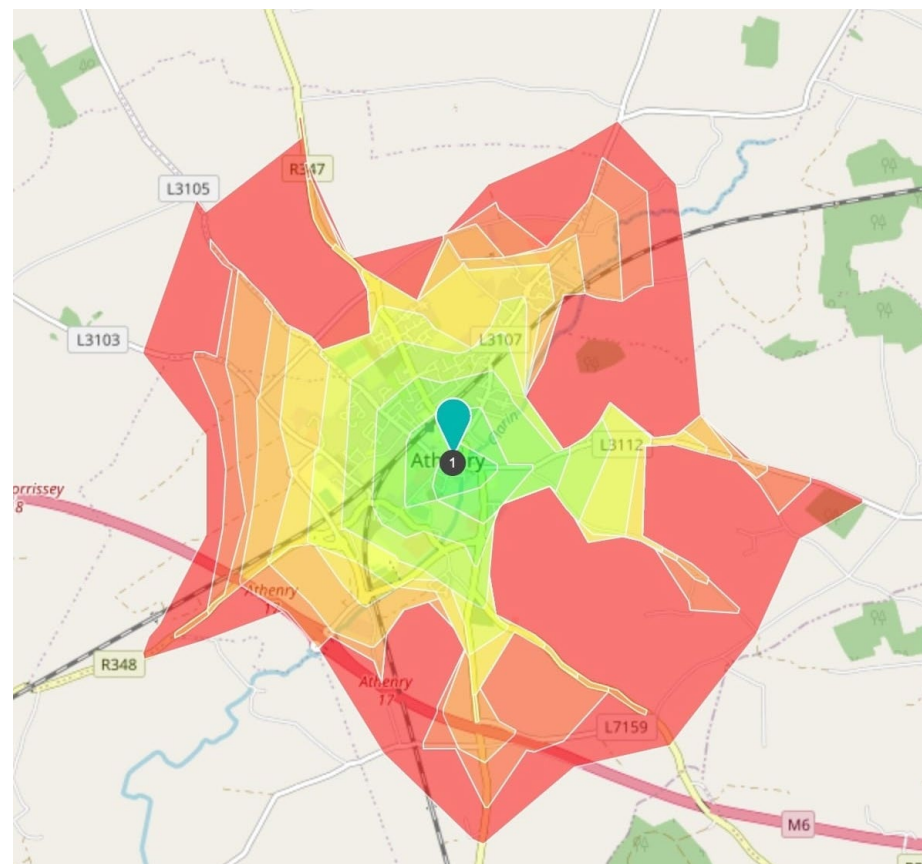


Figure 15 – Heat map evidencing the length of time it would take to cycle to the Square in Athenry from various points within the SEC

Encouraging more cycling within the community is particularly pertinent given the recent announcement that a Cycle route from Athenry to Oranmore has been selected by Galway County Council as an active travel project to be delivered within the next two years. If the route proves to be popular there is every chance it could be connected to the Dublin – Galway cycleway in the coming years.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Given the increasingly higher diesel and petrol costs for fuelling motor vehicles, economically a bicycle has become a more attractive choice, given that after the initial purchase there are essentially no costs bar maintenance.

Furthermore, the initial cost of purchasing a bicycle could be offset for individuals with the Bike to Work Scheme. This is a tax incentive scheme to encourage employees to cycle to work. Under the scheme an employer can pay for a new bicycle (including bicycle accessories) and the employee then repays the cost in regular instalments from their gross salary.

As an employee you save on the costs of cycling to work because your repayments come out of your salary before tax, USC and PRSI are deducted. This means that someone on the highest rate of tax will save almost half of the cost of a new bike and equipment. The scheme applies to bikes and equipment up to the value of €1,250 and for e-bikes and related safety equipment up to the value of €1,500.

Given the SECs size, there is a sizeable commercial element (24% of energy usage). The Athenry SEC could encourage employers within the community, particularly larger ones who aren't currently offering this scheme to do so and promote the Bike to Work scheme to employees on a regular basis.

Commercial/Business

Background

In order to achieve a 51% reduction in Carbon emissions by 2030 and a subsequent 'Climate neutral economy' by 2050, the business community will have to go through a period of transition in the same way as other sectors of the economy. Over the next decade businesses are encouraged to invest in a greener future, through sustainable products, services and business models.

Since this financial crisis, Ireland's economy has shifted from one influenced by the construction sector, to one which is more influenced by SMEs. There are an estimated 234,000 SMEs in Ireland, meaning there is significant potential to reduce emissions within this sub-sector.

Many of the avenues that the commercial/business sector can take to reduce their carbon footprint and move towards a more sustainable model show crossover with the opportunities in the residential sector. However, there are a significant number of commercial processes such as refrigeration within convenience stores, air compressors at warehouse facilities and lighting arrangements in the hospitality industry which use significant amounts of energy and require tailored strategies to reduce this.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Given the turnover that some SMEs are recording in Ireland it can be difficult to have oversight of all monetary outgoings from a business. Therefore, many business owners simply don't notice the amount of unnecessary energy they are using in the day-to-day running of their business.

For this reason, an important theme throughout all these reports is the importance of engaging employee's regarding good energy management and educating all building users on the ways in which everyone within the building can contribute towards saving energy. Simple measures, such as installing lights with motion sensors, or switching off any equipment not in use rather than leaving them on standby, have proven to be successful in saving energy.

[The recent Government announcement](#) aimed at accelerating the decarbonisation of Irish businesses will see a new €55 million programme to help businesses plan for a more sustainable future and accelerate their decarbonisation journeys. The programme, which will run over the next five years will primarily comprise of the following:

- The Climate Planning Fund for Business, will give businesses a €1,800 grant to devise a personalised plan to identify how best to eliminate their reliance on fossil fuels and up to €50,000 matched funding to go towards specific capacity building
- The Enterprise Emissions Reduction Investment Fund will offer up to €1 million for manufacturing businesses to upgrade their processes. With funding to invest in energy monitoring and tracking, carbon neutral heating processes, smart metering and research and development

Method

An analysis of commercial/business energy consumption within the SEC catchment was carried out using various data sources including CIBSE TM46 Energy Benchmarks, Valuations Office and Energy Consumption and SEAI's 'Extensive Survey of Commercial Building Stock in Ireland'.

In order to estimate the potential energy usage of all Industrial and Commercial premises within the catchment area, a method based on estimated floor area and business category was implemented. Energy benchmarks for various business categories were sourced from "CIBSE TM46 Energy Benchmarks and Energy Consumption Guide" and were applied to the floor area data available.

As part of the energy master plan for Athenry four non-domestic premises were audited to Ashrae level 1 to identify any opportunities within these premises for energy efficiency measures. The recommendations within the reports are based on utility data, a site audit, and related engineering calculations.

The site audit consisted of a walk-through of the facility and review of the electrical and mechanical systems and equipment. It is recommended that the organizations implement the measures identified in their reports to contribute towards the energy consumption reduction goals as set out in the Climate Action Plan.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

The premises which were audited are detailed in the following list and a detailed report was provided to each of the property owners the results of which are located within the Appendices:

- Athenry Community Hall
- Raheen Community Centre
- GRETB (Galway Roscommon Education & Training board)
- Galway Rural Development

Results and Analysis

Below is an overview of the estimated total energy usage, emissions and spend from the Commercial/Business sector within the Athenry SEC. This helps the SEC get an idea of just how much their commercial sector needs to reduce it's energy usage by in order to keep in line with the Irish Government's targets in the Climate Action Plan.

Table 15 - SEC Non-Domestic Energy, CO₂ and Spend

Electricity typical benchmark (MW·h)	Fossil-thermal typical benchmark (MW·h)	Illustrative electricity typical benchmark (tCO ₂)	Illustrative fossil-thermal typical benchmark (tCO ₂)	Illustrative total typical benchmark (tCO ₂)	Illustrative total Energy Spend (€)
8228	12358	4352	2348	6700	€3,853,182

¹⁶ climatetoolkit4business.gov.ie

Support for SMEs

Aside from the recommendations contained within the EMP and supplementary non-domestic audits, businesses can utilize the recently created ClimateToolKit ¹⁶ website launched by the government to help businesses get started in taking climate action.

This online tool allows SMEs to input some simple information and get an estimate of their carbon footprint and a personalised action plan to reduce it. Each tailored action plan includes straight-forward, practical instructions and highlights the relevant help that is available from Government, through agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Offices and SEAI.

SEAI have also launched a free, online, learning platform called the '[SEAI Energy Academy](https://seai.ie/business-and-public-sector/small-and-medium-business/supports/energy-audits/)' which is designed to help businesses increase their energy efficiency and reduce their energy related costs. It delivers short, interactive, animated modules on a wide array of topic areas including business and office energy efficiency.

Furthermore, SEAI are currently running an energy audit scheme that offers SMEs a €2,000 voucher towards the cost of a high-quality energy audit ¹⁷. These energy audits are suitable for businesses with an annual energy spend of over €10,000. These energy audits delve deeper than those contained within the report, analysing the sites suitability for various renewable technologies, the most significant users of energy in their business and their overall carbon footprint.

¹⁷ <https://www.seai.ie/business-and-public-sector/small-and-medium-business/supports/energy-audits/>

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

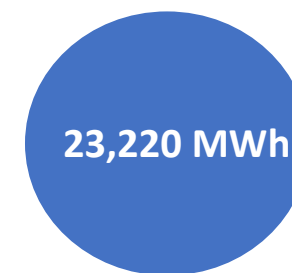
A highly detailed audit like this gives business owners the confidence to take appropriate steps to improve both their energy efficiency and reduce their annual energy bills. The non-domestic audits identified several opportunities within the premises and Athenry SEC which can be developed into energy efficiency projects. The standout projects are:

- **Athenry Community Hall**
 - Upgrade to a Condensing oil boiler which can reduce annual heating costs by 20-25%
- **Raheen Community Centre**
 - Install external or internal insulation in the walls and roof of the building to reduce heat loss
- **GRET B**
 - Install energy monitoring equipment throughout the building
- **Galway Rural Development**
 - Upgrade the single glazed windows to double or triple glazed so to reduce heat loss

Renewable Electricity

Where a 20% reduction in electricity consumption could be achieved there would remain a residual demand in the catchment area of 23,220 MWh. In order to offset this residual demand 10.6 MW of energy generated from wind or a 26.5 MW solar farm would be required to service the catchment area.

Residual Energy Demand



A community led project under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) which has an upper limit of 5MW would be capable of providing a significant amount of the residual energy demand for the community.

A detailed set of calculations on the generator size and the arrangements to use the energy locally would need to be carried out under a more detailed scoping study. Initial calculations indicate that that a wind turbine or solar photovoltaic farm correctly sized and installed with the capacity described above could generate sufficient electricity to meet this demand. A battery or other storage solution may also form part of such an initiative.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Residential Solar PV energy reductions

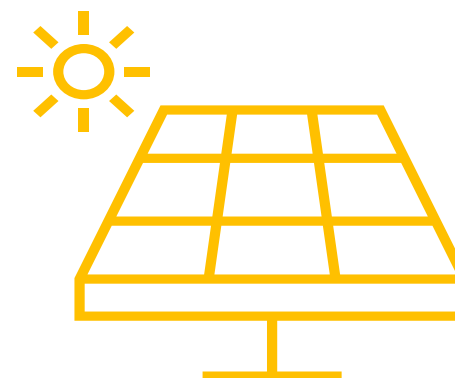
In order to evaluate the practical potential for Solar PV in the Athenry SEC, we have estimated the total roof area that might be suitable for PV installations. Our analysis has assumed that 12m² of the total roof space for every home in the Athenry SEC will be suitable for Solar PV.

We have also assumed optimal roof orientation, with a 30-degree tilt on a South facing roof, with only mild overshadowing. We have been unable to include community and commercial buildings within our analysis due to absence of data on the roof area of the buildings.

Previous planning regulations which limited residential Solar PV installations to be no more than 12m² or 50% of the total roof space were recently scrapped. This now allows homeowners to install Solar PV systems that exceed the aforementioned sizes without planning permission. This applies to [98% of homes in the country](#), with special zones around airports to be excluded. However, for the purposes of this exercise PlanEnergy have taken a conservative view and based calculations on a more affordable 2kWp structure.

Using these assumptions, if every home in the Athenry SEC were to install a 2kWp Solar PV structure, theoretically the community would produce 2.91 MW of Solar Power, reducing its annual electricity consumption by 10.7% (After 20% energy reduction through energy efficiency measures).

Of course, this total would be much higher if we were able to include the Commercial/Public buildings, but this gives the SEC a good overview of what they could potentially achieve.



2.91 MW of Residential Solar PV

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Wind Development in the SEC

Galway County Council has determined that wind farm development is not permissible or will have low wind speeds in vast swathes of the County, however, there are areas just over a kilometre from the Athenry SEC where wind energy would be considered as illustrated in Figure 17. PlanEnergy have leveraged the data available in the 2022 - 2028 Development Plan and highlighted those areas where Galway County Council have deemed suitable for wind development.

Should suitable sites be identified, wind could make a very significant contribution to Athenry SECs energy profile. Our modelling assumes that a 20% reduction in electrical consumption based on energy efficiency measures an 11 MW wind project would allow the Athenry SEC to become energy independent and meet their residual consumption of 23,902 MWh a year.

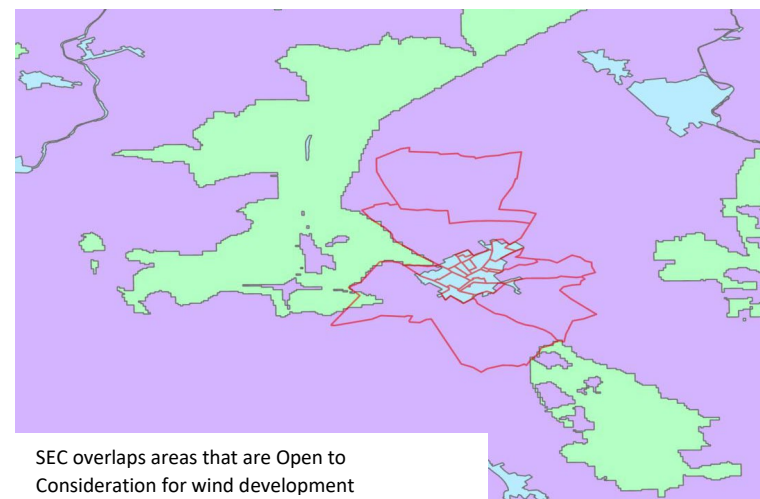


Figure 17 – A close up of the Wind development map evidences Athenry is extremely close to areas considered suitable for wind development

Proximity to substations

The use of energy is supported and influenced by the presence of specific energy infrastructure in the local area. In terms of electricity supply, Figure 18 evidences the sub stations that are within 10km of Athenry SEC, which is generally seen as the limit for any non-utility (major development) scale developments.

Fortunately, Athenry is in the position of having two substations within close proximity of the SEC. It's important to be aware that all substations have a certain amount of capacity for electrical generation.

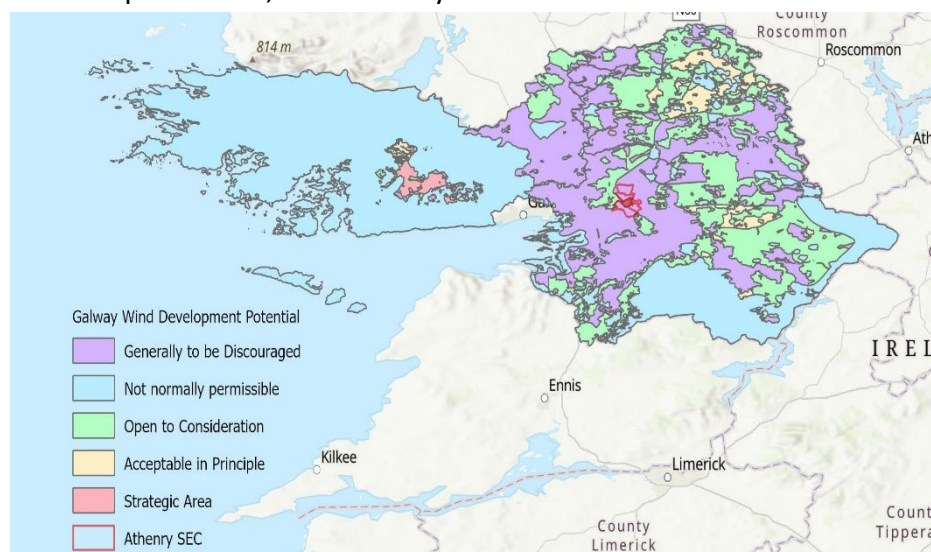


Figure 16 – Map evidencing those areas in Galway favored for wind development

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

In simple terms, this means we cannot build and connect an unlimited amount of Renewable Energy generating projects to the electricity grid without first upgrading it so that there is sufficient capacity available. The substation nearest the SEC has approximately 1.6 MW of spare capacity available at the time of writing which would be a suitable amount for a community-owned project. This would be a very attractive prospect for a wind project that would fall under the RESS scheme. This data is based on the ESB Network Capacity map which is intermittently updated to reflect the capacity of substations across the country.

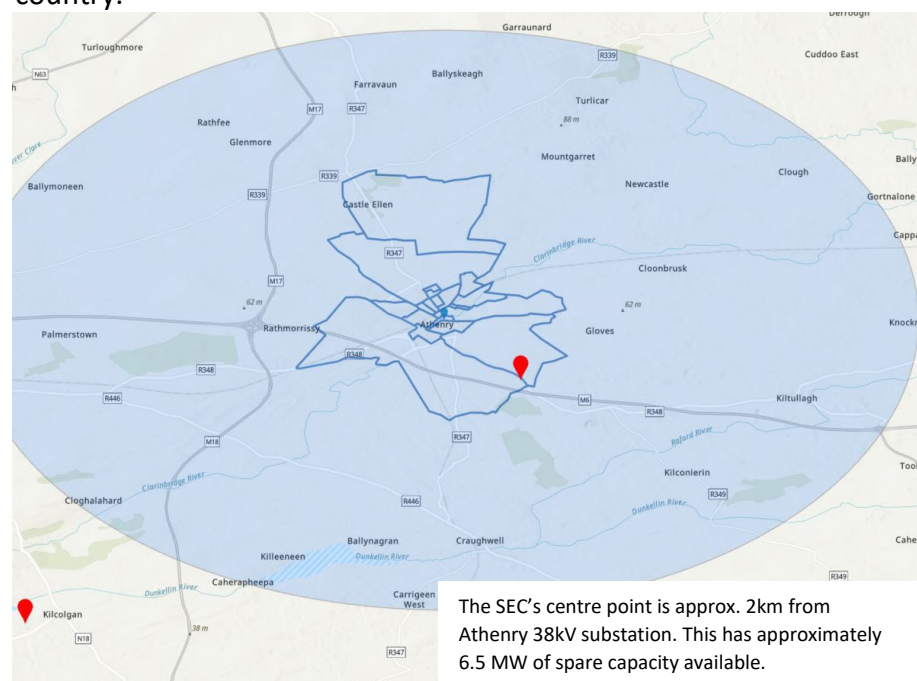


Figure 18 – Athenry SECs proximity to existing sub stations (10km buffer). The red point denotes a substation

¹⁸ <https://www.dcae.gov.ie/en-ie/energy/topics/Renewable-Energy/electricity/renewable-electricity-supports/ress/Pages/default.aspx>

Renewable Electricity Support Scheme

The Government of Ireland has put in place a scheme called the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS)¹⁸ which aims to deliver increased community involvement in renewable energy projects. This scheme provides financial support for renewable electricity projects of over 0.5 MW in size in the Republic of Ireland.

RESS is an auction-based scheme, which invites renewable electricity projects to bid for capacity and receive a guaranteed price for the electricity they generate.

Support schemes like RESS, in place all over the world, are a way of ensuring that renewable energy technologies are incentivized to replace the use of fossil fuels in our economy. Communities are incentivized to invest in renewable technologies by Governments who contract to buy electricity at a guaranteed price for the long term, typically a period of about fifteen years.

In total, about 3,000 'gigawatt-hours' will be put up for auction by the state. The most cost-efficient bidder will be the first picked, the second most cost-efficient will be the second picked and so on until all the gigawatt-hours are accounted for. In essence this means only the most efficient project offering a price at the lowest level will get picked.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Eligible technologies under the RESS scheme include:



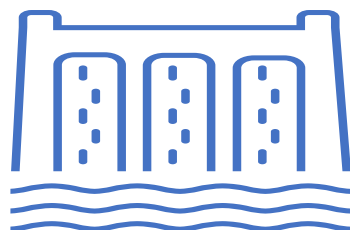
Onshore wind turbines/solar thermal/solar PV technology



Onshore wind turbines/solar thermal/solar PV technology with battery storage



High-efficiency Combined Heat and Power (CHP) boilers fueled exclusively by waste, biomass or biogas



Hydroelectric

All projects looking for support under the RESS scheme will need to meet certain criteria before becoming successful. There are three aspects of community participation in RESS:

- Community Led Projects
- Community Benefit Funds
- Community Enabling Framework

Community Led Project Criteria

The application must be made in conjunction with a Sustainable Energy Community (SEC). The SEC must be identified in the Declaration of a Community-Led Project, together with a description of the relationship between the Applicant and the Sustainable Energy Community. In addition:

- Project size must be between 0.5 and 5 Megawatts
- Fully (100%) owned by a Renewable Energy Community (REC)- primary purpose is community benefit (environmental, economic, or social) rather than financial profit
- Community group must be based on open and voluntary participation
- Participation based on local domicile (within close proximity to the RESS project)

Community Benefit Funds

A key feature of RESS is that all projects must establish a 'Community Benefit Fund' to be used for the wider economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of the local community. The amount payable by RESS Projects into the Community Benefit Fund by the Government is mandated at €2 per Megawatt hour of electricity generated from a RESS Project. This means there are quantifiable funds made available annually for the benefit of the local community.

This will allow communities to further invest in local renewable energy, energy efficiency measures and climate action initiatives. For RESS-1 alone it is envisaged that almost €4m in annual payments, over a period of approximately 15 years, will be paid into the Community Benefit Funds in communities that host RESS-1 projects.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

With several more RESS auctions planned in the coming decade the total funds involved are several hundred million euro in value over the lifetime of RESS.

Recently it was announced that Community-led projects seeking to apply to future RESS auctions, must be 100% owned by the community, as opposed to being majority owned as was the case for RESS-1. Therefore, Community-Led Projects must now meet the following requirements:

(a) at all relevant times be 100% owned by a Renewable Energy Community (the “Relevant REC”) either by way of (i) a direct ownership of the RESS 2 Project’s assets, or (ii) a direct ownership of the shares in the Generator; and

(b) at all relevant times, 100% of all profits, dividends and surpluses derived from the RESS 2 Project are returned to the Relevant REC.

Community Enabling Framework

Project planning, grid infrastructure and community buy-in remain the major obstacles to a community led development. Community consensus is the key to the successful development of a community owned project. If there is consensus within the community, an application can then be made to SEAI (or another funding body) to carry out a feasibility study for a renewable energy development in the areas within the community identified.

This feasibility study should look at grid capacity and constraints, planning constraints, environmental designations, and residential buffer zones around the proposed sites.

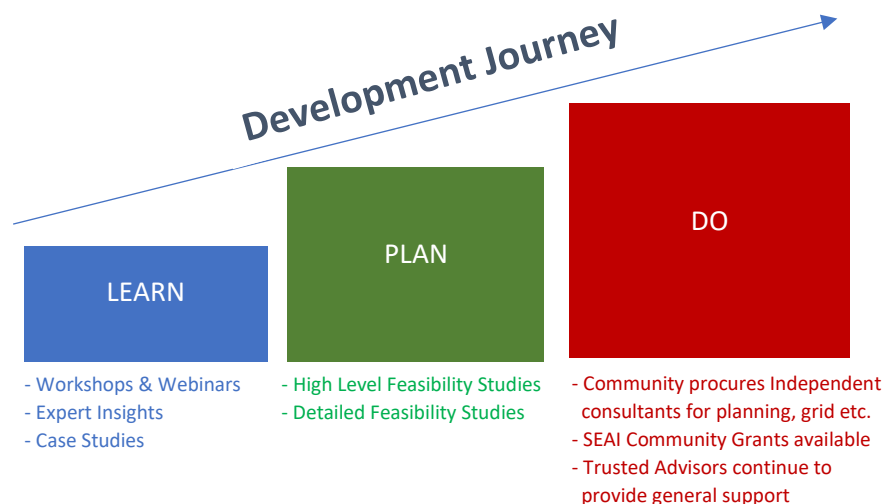
One of the key community provisions as part of RESS is the Community Enabling Framework which provides end-to-end support to create a community energy sector in Ireland that can flourish sustainably over time and one that will deliver meaningful impact to communities nationwide. SEAI have been appointed by the Department of Environment, Climate & Communications (DECC) as the implementation body for this Framework which will provide a range of supports including:

1. **Trusted Intermediary:** this is effectively the RESS community team within SEAI. This is the first place that communities go to seek help with their RESS projects. The contact email is: CommunityRESS@seai.ie
2. **Information warehouse:** SEAI have developed a number of toolkits to help communities understand the RESS journey¹⁹. Toolkits include: onshore wind, solar PV, the planning process and grid connection. There are several more in development. The Toolkits provides a set of guidance modules across a number of different areas (including technology options, business planning, project development stages, setting up an organisation / governance strategy) to support development and delivery of a Renewable Energy project.

¹⁹ <https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/ress/enabling-framework/>

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

3. The **Trusted Advisor** (TA) service from SEAI is now available for communities who want to develop their own electricity generation projects. The TAs will help the SECs through the development stages of a generation project. This will include two free feasibility studies to determine if the community generation project is viable.



4. **Financial supports:** this is the community RESS enabling grant. The total grant available is 80% of eligible costs up to a maximum of €180,000. Entry to the grant programme is based on the successful completion of the feasibility stage conducted by an SEAI appointed TA from above. The grants can be drawn down in €25,000 tranches on completion of key milestones. A requirement before drawing down the second tranche is the undertaking of a public engagement event to ensure that the generation project is socialised within the community.

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Sustainable Energy Roadmap

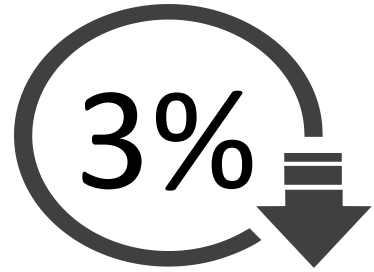
The Sustainability Energy Roadmap is one of the key outputs of the Energy Master Plan as it outlines to the community the scale of the challenge faced in moving the community from their baseline to achieving 2030 reduction targets. The following analysis provides a general path for the SEC to reach each of its targets: 30% energy reduction and increase the efficiency of a significant number of homes in the community by 2030.

These targets have been broken down in each of the sectors detailed in the table below.

Table 16:- 3% Annual reduction in the Carbon Footprint for Athenry SEC

Community CO2	
tCO2	23,864
% Annual CO2 Reduction	3%
Year	tCO2
2022	23,148
2023	22,453
2024	21,780
2025	21,126
2026	20,492
2027	19,878
2028	19,281
2029	18,703
2030	18,142
2031	17,598
2032	17,070

Table 17 - Athenry SEC Plan to 2030			
	Number of Projects	Primary Energy Savings (kWh)	CO ₂ Savings (tonnes)
Community owned Wind Project in MW	9.8	21,501,902	6,360
Residential Housing Upgrades to B2 Medium Heat Pump	370	3,418,800	1,595
Electrical Vehicle (EV) Ownership	40% Change	4,186,748	1,232
Reduction in Car Journeys though remote working & EV Ownership	40% Change	6,493,540	1,434
Total		35,600,991	10,622



Annual Reduction in the Carbon Footprint for Athenry SEC

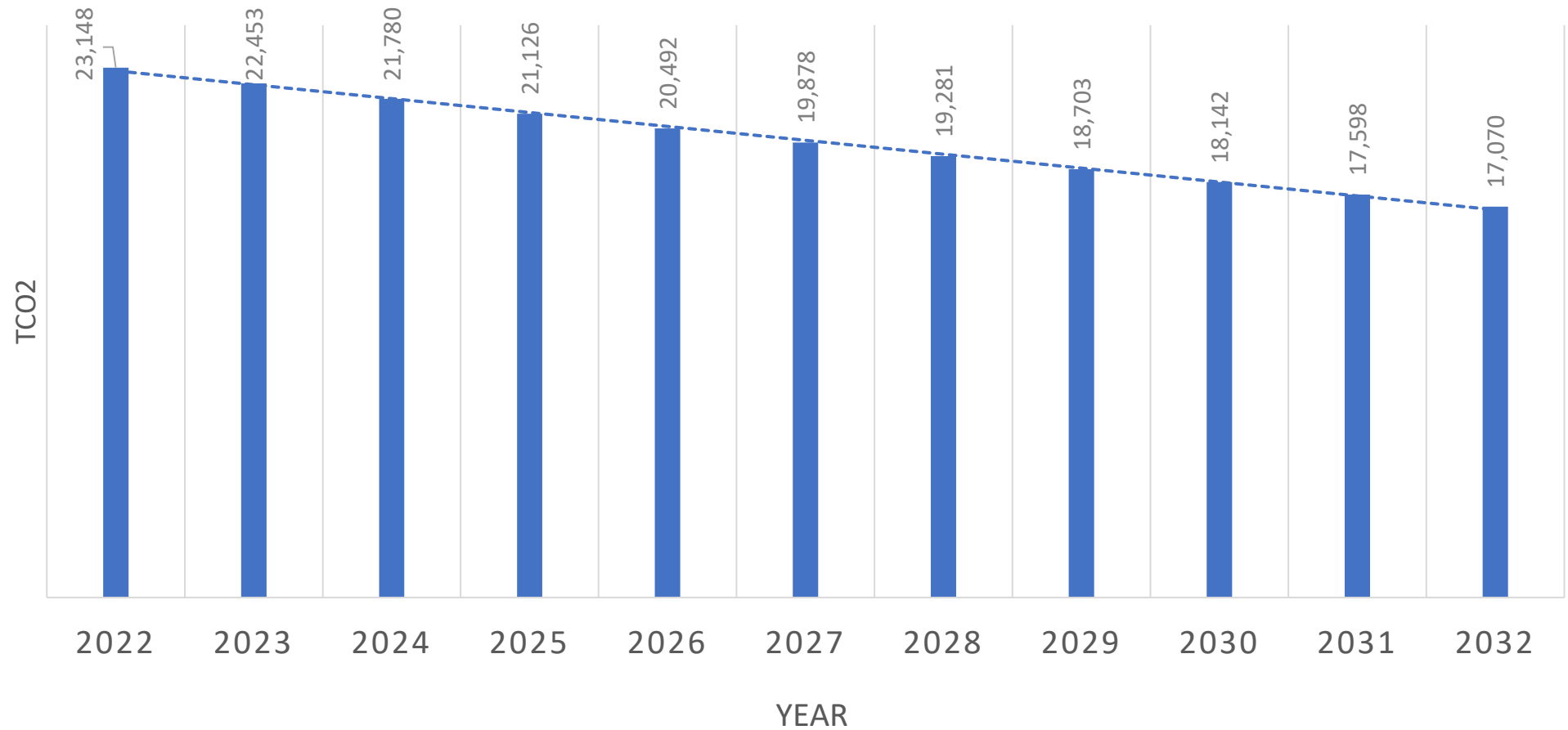


Figure 19 – The reduction in tonnes of CO₂ annually if the SEC reduces its Carbon footprint by 3%

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Register of Opportunities (RoO)

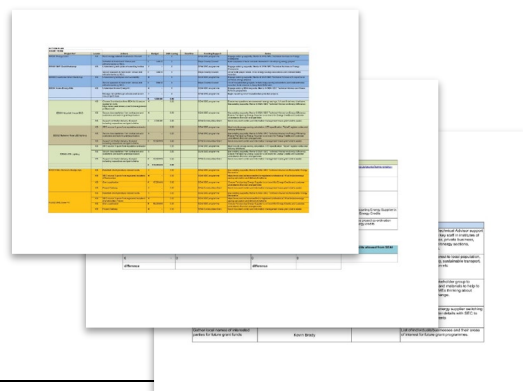
The Register of Opportunities (RoO)²⁰ developed for Athenry SEC provides a list of projects in three categories which have been identified within the community.

Behavior and Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Projects have been identified, which have both short- and medium-term timescales. The RoO provides for a detailed project specific planning tool including project cost, energy impact and carbon savings.

The Register of Opportunities (RoO) is a live document used to identify, evaluate, and plan your energy projects. The Sustainable Energy Community owns this document and is responsible for using, editing and improving the content in order to match its ambitions.

The RoO is presented in an excel workbook because some parts contain formulas to calculate financial and energy savings.

* Example of Register of Opportunities Document



²⁰ Each of the projects are detailed within the RoO spreadsheet, which is a live document attached as Appendix B.

As part of the scope of works for the Energy Master Plan for Athenry SEC, a number of domestic energy audits and non-domestic audits were carried out on buildings selected within the community. Sections of the register of opportunities was generated from these audits based on the information available.

The key criteria when selecting projects where are suitable to progress are:

- 1) Return on investment or payback period
- 2) Complexity of the project
- 3) Are the project costs known?
- 4) Is supporting funding available?
- 5) What impact is the project going to have on the community?

Key standout projects are listed below with a full breakdown included in the Appendix:

- 6kWp Solar PV system at GRETB
- Community e-bike scheme
- Community EV Charging Point
- Feasibility study for a Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) community power project in the Athenry SEC

Note: The costings provided are indicative only and quotations should be sought from suitably qualified contractors following an appropriate design and specification process.

Action Plan for Athenry SEC

Climate Action at a Neighbourhood-level

It is easy to become overwhelmed by the challenge of decarbonising all sectors of society. The energy master plan will employ a neighbourhood-level strategy to overcome this by recognising these as critical sites for participation and experimentation in climate action.

By focusing on neighbourhood climate action, we can shift away from the individual or the state and move toward the community. The COVID-19 pandemic limited people's movement and reintroduced them to their surroundings. So this becomes an opportune time to explore the neighbourhood as a potential site for bottom-up action.

To inspire engagement in neighbourhood-based collective action, group identity and a sense of belonging to a neighbourhood are vital. In addition, people in such settings frequently feel a greater sense of responsibility to their neighbours and the community and provide immediate assistance in times of emergency. Fostering this resilience at a local level is a core aim of the Athenry SEC to help mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Studies show that neighbourhood-scale climate change action often addresses issues such as building energy efficiency, low-carbon mobility solutions, waste management, and water efficiency. Some projects, such as bike repair clinics and renewable energy workshops, aim to inspire sustainable consumption cultures and build skills required for living a low-carbon lifestyle.

This aligns with the register of opportunities that are a key output of this masterplan and devising a strategy to engage at a neighbourhood level will also be an important aspect of the implementation of these opportunities. As such, the following opportunities are put forward to work with the neighbourhoods of Athenry.

- Map the neighbourhoods of Athenry and create an effective communications strategy to identify climate champions in key sites for an initial pilot study of this approach.
- Co-create learning materials and gather resources to pilot the roll-out of the neighbourhood strategy with the support of SEAI and other local stakeholders including Galway Rural Development.
- Reflect on findings of pilot study and adapt the strategy to scale to additional neighbourhoods in the town.

Capacity Building

One of the key elements in the development of a successful Sustainable Energy Community is the ability to build capacity within the group which is required for the implementation of successful projects. By increasing the capacity of the SEC there is a higher probability that the group will be able to take on more complex projects as their confidence grows. Capacity building can be achieved by utilising the mentors appointed to the group by SEAI to arrange educational and training initiatives as well as vocational and third level education bodies. The SEC can also work with other established SEC's to arrange shared learnings.

Energy Master Plan Dissemination to Community

The dissemination of the Energy Master Plan throughout the community is one of the key actions for the SEC now that the plan has been completed. The Energy Master Plan will provide the community with an understanding of what their current energy profile is and where they as a community should put their efforts in reducing their energy and carbon footprint.

Communication and Engagement Events

Engagement with other community organisations to identify shared needs especially in the development of existing community assets for remote working may be beneficial to the greater community. The upgrading and reimagining of community buildings through BEC grants to provide remote working hubs, childcare facilities, or social hubs feeds into the DO stage of the SEC's plan.

Please refer to Appendix A for more information on BEC grants. In addition to other community groups, private sector groups such as energy project developers which have community benefit funds may be interested in providing support to the SEC, but only if they are aware of its existence.

Low Lying Fruit First

The SEC is encouraged to develop low-effort, low-cost efficiency projects first to increase their internal capacity and skills.

These low-effort, low-cost efficiency measures can be quick wins for the community and encourage the group to tackle more complex, higher effort projects in the future. These projects also provide a focus point for the greater community to prompt discussions and knowledge sharing experiences.

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[7] NSAI, SR54 Code of Practice for the Energy Efficiency Retrofit of Buildings

Appendix A: Grant Streams

Better Energy Communities

Better Energy Communities is the national retrofit initiative which provides capital grants for energy efficiency projects in Irish communities. The BEC programme with grant support of up to €28 million for 2021 aims to deliver energy savings to homeowners, communities, and private sector organisations. Projects must be community orientated with a focus on cross-sectoral approach.

Successful Community projects must demonstrate some or all of the following characteristics.

- Community benefits
- Multiple elements, not a single focus
- Mix of sustainable solutions
- Innovation and project ambition
- Justified energy savings
- An ability to deliver the project

The following list outlines the types of measures that SEAI want to support through the Communities grant program

- Building Fabric Upgrades
- Technology and System upgrades
- Integration of renewable energy sources
- Domestic Combined Fabric Upgrade
- Single Building Demonstration projects will be considered under the Communities Grant

BEC 2022 Funding Levels

The level of funding and processes associated with Better Energy Communities Grants has been changing over the past number of years and is constantly evolving. It is recommended that prospective fund applicants check for the latest processes and funding levels at the time of enquiry. The latest information available at the time of publication of this document can be accessed at:

<https://www.seai.ie/grants/community-grants/project-criteria-and-funding/Communities-Grant-Guidelines-2022.pdf>.

As a rough guide in the past residential funding has generally ranged from up to 35% in private and rented homes, with up to 80% in fuel poor homes.

SEAI's Home Energy Grants

<https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-energy-grants/>

SEAI primarily has three grants and supports schemes for individual homeowners who wish to make energy upgrades to their home:

- Free Energy Upgrade
- Individual Energy Upgrade Grants
- One Stop Shop Service

Free Energy Upgrade

This SEAI grant provides free energy-efficient home upgrades for homeowners that receive certain welfare payments. Homeowners will receive a free assessment from an SEAI surveyor who will recommend the most suitable upgrades for the property.

Eligible Free Energy Upgrade home improvements		
Attic insulation	Cavity wall insulation	External wall insulation
Internal wall insulation	Replacement windows	Heating Systems upgrade
Heating controls	Ventilation	Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs)
Draught proofing	Lagging jacket	

To qualify for any of these SEAI grants under the Free Energy Upgrade Scheme, homeowners need to meet all of the following criteria:

- The home must be your main residence and you must be the homeowner
- The home was constructed before 2006. It must have also been lived in prior to this date
- The home has an energy rating of C, D, E, F, or G.
- You receive one of the following government payments:
 - Fuel Allowance scheme
 - Working Family Payment
 - One-Parent Family Payment
 - Domiciliary Care Allowance
 - Carers Allowance. You must be living with the person you are caring for
 - Disability Allowance for more than six months. You must also have a child less than seven years old
 - Job Seekers Allowance for more than six months. You must also have a child less than seven years old

The Free Energy Upgrade grant will cover all expenses for a Home Survey, Contractor Selection, Contractor Works and a BER certificate. It is important to note that it will be the Surveyor who decides the improvements to make, the homeowner cannot choose which specific upgrades they would like.

Individual Energy Upgrade Grants

This grant allows the homeowner to choose which home improvements to bring, choose the registered contractor, and complete the work yourself. Despite being more in charge of this grant, you still need to wait for the approval of the grant before starting the project.

Measure	Individual Energy Upgrade Grants			
	Detached	Semi D/End of Terrace	Mid Terrace	Apartment
Ceiling insulation	€1,500	€1,300	€1,200	€800
Cavity Wall Insulation	€1,700	€1,200	€800	€400
External Wall Insulation	€8,000	€6,000	€3,500	€3,000
Internal Insulation	€4,500	€3,500	€2,000	€1,500
Air to Air Heat pump system	€3,500			
Air to water Heat pump system	€6,000			€4,500
Ground source to water Heat pump system	€6,000			€4,500
Heat Pump Technical Assessment	€200			
Heating Controls (Homes built pre-2011)	€700			
Solar Water heating	€1,200			
Solar PV (Homes built pre-2021)	€1,800 for 2kWp system, additional €300 per kWp up to €2,400			

To qualify for any of the SEAI individual energy upgrade grants, you need to meet all four of the following criteria:

- The home must be your main residence and you must be the homeowner
- For any of the insulation and heating controls grants, your home must have been constructed and lived in before 2011
- For any of the heat pumps and renewable energy systems grants, your home must have been constructed and lived in before 2021
- Your home must not have received the same home improvement government grant in the past

One Stop Shop Service

Under this programme, homeowners will be able to receive a complete home energy upgrade. These will be managed by registered contractors who will manage the entire process for you. From the initial assessment, placing the SEAI grant application for you, conducting the work, and providing the final BER.

Measure	One Stop Shop Service grants			
	Detached	Semi D/End of Terrace	Mid Terrace	Apartment
Home Energy Assessment	€ 350			
Air Tightness	€ 1,000			
Mechanical Ventilation	€ 1,500			
Solar Hot Water	€ 1,200			
Bonus for reaching B2 with a Heat Pump	€ 2,000			
Heating Controls	€ 700			
Air to Air Heat Pump system	€ 3,500			
Floor insulation	€ 3,500			
External doors (max of 2)	€800 per door			
Heat Pump Systems	€6,500			€4,500
Central Heating System for Heat Pump	€2,000			€1,000

Measure	One Stop Shop Service grants			
	Detached	Semi D/End of Terrace	Mid Terrace	Apartment
Attic insulation	€1,500	€1,300	€1,200	€800
Cavity Wall Insulation	€1,700	€1,200	€800	€700
External Wall Insulation	€8,000	€6,000	€3,500	€3000
Internal Insulation	€4,500	€3,500	€2,000	€1,500
Rafter Insulation	€3,000	€3,000	€2,000	€1,500
Windows (Complete Upgrade)	€4,000	€3,000	€1,800	€1,500
Project Management	€2,000	€1,600	€1,200	€800
Solar PV - 0 to 2kWp	€900/kWp			
Solar PV - 2 to 4kWp	€300/kWp			

Athenry SEC Energy Master Plan

Your home or property needs to meet all of the following criteria to qualify for the One Stop Shop Service grant:

- The home must be your main residence and you must be the homeowner
- Your home must have been constructed and lived in before 2011 for insulation and heating controls grants
- Your home must have been constructed and lived in before 2021 for heat pumps and renewable energy systems grants
- Your property must have a B3 or lower energy efficiency rating and a minimum of a B2 upon completion of the upgrades
- Your property must not have received government grants in the past for the same home improvement

For more information and to get in contact with a One Stop Shop, please visit - <https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-energy-grants/one-stop-shop/registered-providers/>

Electric Vehicles

Privately bought EVs

A maximum grant of €5,000 is available for qualifying new electric vehicles when purchased privately. Approved EVs with a List Price of less than €14,000 will not receive a grant. As of the 1st of July 2021, there is a cap of €60,000 on the full price of all vehicles. The full price of the vehicle to the customer includes all optional extras, paint, and delivery for excludes any incentives such as grants or rebates.

List Price of Approved EV	Grant available
€14,000 to €15,000	€2,000
€15,000 to €16,000	€2,500
€16,000 to €17,000	€3,000
€17,000 to €18,000	€3,500
€18,000 to €19,000	€4,000
€19,000 to €20,000	€4,500
Greater than €20,000	€5,000

Commercially bought EVs

SEAI provides grant supports towards the purchase of new N1 category electric vehicles for business and public entities. N1 category vehicles are typically small goods carrying vans with a technically permissible maximum mass not exceeding 3500kg.

A maximum grant of €3,800 is available for qualifying N1 category EVs when purchased commercially. Approved EVs with a list price of less than €14,000 will not receive a grant. It should be noted that these grants apply to new vehicles only and cannot be claimed on secondhand vehicles.

The grant level depends on the list price of the vehicle. This is the full non-discounted price in the absence of VRT relief or grant support.

Vehicle Registration Tax

Electrical vehicles receive VRT relief separately to SEAI grant support as well as reduced motor tax.

Home Unit Charger

SEAI provide a grant up to the value of €600 towards the purchase and installation of a home charger unit.

Benefit in Kind

For commercial electric cars, Revenue provides an exemption for Benefit in Kind.²¹

²¹ <https://www.seai.ie/sustainable-solutions/electric-vehicles/>