

MAJOR POINTS ARISING FROM PRESENTATIONS AT NPF MEETINGS AND OUR RESEARCH WORK

Dr Bernadette O'Rega [REDACTED]

1. METHODS FOR OPERATIONALISING THE PLAN

- In implementing the Plan, we should accept the existence of uncertainty and risk. As has been adopted in other EU States eg Sweden and Germany, policies should be implemented on a trial basis and reviewed after 3-5yr. If successful, rolled out and if not, stopped and alternative policy trialled. Policies found not to work represent learning opportunities and are NOT to be regarded as failure.
- In relation to the spatial dimension to planning, rather than think only in terms of zones, we should think in terms of networks and flows. Important flows are water (supply, treatment, flood management); energy, solid, hazardous and liquid waste; money (to regions, rural areas); people mobility; freight transport. Spatial analyses of flows allow systems modelling as an aid to exploiting potential efficiencies and opportunities for a circular economy.
- Planning should be integrated, systems-based and pro-active and not reactive ie not mostly in response to projects seeking planning approval. Otherwise creation of eg polycentric urban areas is rendered nearly impossible.
- Given the known limitations of projecting into the future, backcasting from scenarios might be a favoured method.
- Work closely with methods indicated in 2015 Energy White Paper in relation to exploiting opportunities arising from empowered, educated and supported activists and communities, optimally balancing top down with bottom up actions. This will require greatly enhanced communication between Local Authorities and voluntary communities, facilitated by very clear guidance from Government to Local Authorities.
- The overall motto might be '*make it easy to do the right thing*'.

2. CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS

- Sea level rise, increased incidence of extreme weather event and to be anticipated and planned for through changing standards in exposed areas, avoidance of building on flood plains. Almost all major decisions will have implications for climate, not all effects can be mitigated.
- Regarding temperature, currently there remain two possibilities: (a) Ireland will get warmer with the rest of the Northern Hemisphere, and (b) Ireland will get much colder as a result of the North Atlantic Drift closing down (possibly giving us a climate akin to Newfoundland.) This situation will require continual review.

3. DECARBONISATION

- To be successful it has to be tackled in many sectors simultaneously and planned with systems analyses. For transport, to reduce fossil fuel use, to increase use of public transport, smart logistics for urban areas using EVs, to plan for short distances

between residence and work (ie avoid 'residential' 'industrial' or 'business zonings). For building, passive standard and positive energy balance where possible, for solid waste the elimination of methane emissions, for waste water treatment significant reduction in energy consumption in long distance pumping and aeration, support for renewables through favourable tariffs and easy grid linking, for landuse soil carbon sequestration, afforestation, change in enterprise away from ruminants, etc

- For industry, energy efficiency and on site generation. Calculation of actual savings must take full cognisance of rebound effect and possible backfire. Product design for longevity and ease of re-use/recycling.
- For food, reduce food-miles, greatly enhance recycling of nitrates and especially phosphorus. Local, organic produce to be encouraged, major diversification of Irish agriculture.

4. SOCIETY, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- Full recognition of links between environment and physical/mental well-being. Access to care and hospitals crucial. Child care facilities crucial to facilitate female employment.
- For communities to accept change, major income disparities will need to be less evident.
- For longer term planning to work, security must be effective and trusted.
- Community enterprise has a significant potential for creating employment and encouraging environment friendly behaviours such as re-use and recycling. Barriers to community enterprises becoming established, or existing companies expanding, need to be removed.

5. RURAL AREAS

- Greatly expand the role of cooperatives.
- Encourage cooperative clusters of farms, eg milk and heifer producers, energy crops and AD. Heat for greenhouses, farm buildings and wood chip drying, electricity to farm buildings and the grid.
- Ban new builds other than farm buildings/other rural economy based enterprises outside a radius of 2km of a settlement of village size or larger.

Additional information or explanation if required from Dr Bernadette O'Regan

