

NPF Submissions
Forward Planning Section
Department of Housing, Planning,
Community and Local Government,
Custom House
Dublin
D01 W6X0

31st March 2017

RE: National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040 Our Plan

By electronic submission at www.npf.ie

Dear Sir or Madam,

Energy Cork welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the first stage of the National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040 Our Plan process. The NPF will be a vital part of our shared goal to develop and support vibrant, sustainable, healthy, prosperous and happy communities around the country, and to guide the development and delivery of world-leading infrastructure and services to enable these communities.

Energy Cork is an industry-driven cluster, with over 80 members who employ approx 4,000 people, pursuing coordinated actions to strengthen enterprise and employment within the energy sector in the Cork Region. The initiative is supported by Cork City Council and Cork County Council through their respective Economic Development Funds. Energy Cork was initially conceived by Cork Chamber with a view to building on the unique opportunities for the region to secure competitive advantage in the energy sector.

One of the key roles of Energy Cork, as the energy sector cluster for the Cork region, is to promote Cork's position as the ideal place to do business in the energy sector. For a broader consideration of the strengths and opportunities arising from the Cork region, Energy Cork recommends the *Cork 2050 – Realising the Full Potential*¹ submission prepared by Cork City Council and Cork County Council and the submission of Cork Chamber, both of which Energy Cork supports.

Our short submission will focus upon four strands of our current strategy which are of particular relevance to the NPF development and which should be reflected in the NPF process:

- Energy Supply
- Buildings & Construction
- Energy in Transport
- Environment and Climate Change

¹ <http://www.corkcoco.ie/co/pdf/130792282.pdf?nocache=1243428>

Energy Supply

The Cork region, including Cork City and County, is **unique in Ireland in terms of its importance to the national energy landscape** and its potential to facilitate and support innovation and enterprise in that sector to boost economic activity and employment nationally.

Cork's natural resources include proven and exploited resources of natural gas, hydroelectricity, onshore wind, biomass, geothermal and solar energy. In addition, exploitable resources of oil, ocean energy and offshore wind energy are present in the region.

Cork's energy infrastructure is extensive. Ireland's only oil refinery, operated by Irving Oil at Whitegate, is located in the region. Extensive oil storage facilities at Whitegate and Bantry Bay place Cork at the centre of the oil industry in Ireland.

Cork was the first region in the country to see indigenous natural gas brought ashore. The Kinsale, Ballycotton and Seven Heads fields have been developed since the 1970's and Bord Gáis was established and headquartered in the region to facilitate the development of the necessary transmission, distribution and marketing systems to supply the national economy.

A concentration of electrical power generation in the harbour area means there is a significant supply of low grade heat (up to 100MW) and electrical power (up to 1400MW) available to attract and support manufacturing industry.

The Cork Region is a net exporter of energy – it accounts for approximately 13% of Ireland's energy use and supplies approximately 25% of national energy requirements. No other region has a similar positive balance of supply and demand.

Of particular importance is **Ireland's Energy Hub²**, located around Cork Harbour. It comprises the country's most strategically important cluster of energy infrastructure, businesses and research facilities.

The Energy Hub supplies over 25% of Ireland's energy demands, is home to 20% of Ireland's electricity generating capacity and the country's only oil refinery. Many of the largest energy companies in Ireland are represented within the Energy Hub or in the wider Cork region. There is also a strong concentration of engineering service providers in support of these industries.

Cork County Council has designated a large, important area adjacent to Whitegate Refinery for use for major energy related developments.

² <http://www.energycork.ie/index.php/portfolio/5306/>

Ireland's Energy Hub is already home to major employers and strategically important energy infrastructure. It is an ideal place in which to do business, particularly within the energy sector and has a proven record of delivering energy projects.

Energy Cork's goal, in support of the employers and research organisations within Ireland's Energy Hub, is to advertise and promote the unique position of the Hub in the Irish context. The Cork Harbour region has an established track record in facilitating and supporting major industrial developments, with a strong pro-business and technically skilled workforce and culture. This sits very comfortably alongside the Harbour's great natural beauty and amenity value.

Buildings and Construction

As was made explicit in the Government's recent Energy Policy White Paper, the key to reducing energy costs, achieving climate change targets and ensuring comfortable homes for all citizens is **Energy Efficient Buildings**. Much of Government policy and public concern to date has focussed on energy supply – in particular, greening our electricity system. This focus on electricity has brought welcome and impressive advances, however it has also led to Ireland lagging behind in terms of mainstreaming best practice building energy use.

It is imperative that the NPF reinforce and give practical expression to the goals of the Energy Policy White Paper to encourage real, vibrant sustainable energy communities and unlock the enormous potential of energy efficient retrofitting of Ireland's housing stock, as well as commercial and industrial buildings.

In order to play our own part in delivering on these goals, Energy Cork has founded **Energy Champion CLG**, which has been formed to pursue, foster and deliver sustainable energy projects in Cork. In the first instance, Energy Champion CLG has joined SEAI's Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) programme and is working to deliver a county-wide Cork SEC.

Energy in Transport

Energy Cork supports low-carbon transport, as well as the technologies, infrastructural developments and policy mechanisms required to make low carbon transport – including walking, cycling, public and private bus and rail, as well as private cars - a realistic and affordable option for all.

The transport sector is responsible for over 33% of Ireland's primary energy requirement and over 20% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. A roadmap, prepared in 2014, that envisages **Cork – A low-carbon vehicle hub**³ is available on the Energy Cork website and outlines our broad approach to low carbon vehicle technology i.e. that electric vehicles be encouraged for private car and small

³ <http://www.energycork.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Cork-A-low-carbon-vehicle-hub.pdf>

commercial van use and that CNG/Renewable Biogas be encouraged for commercial freight and public transport fleets.

Energy Cork has pursued a number of initiatives, together with other regional stakeholders over the last three years to deliver the goal of Cork as a low-carbon vehicle hub. Firstly, Energy Cork helped to deliver Cork's *Drive4Zero*⁴, with the aim of encouraging the purchase of electric vehicles in Cork and the proliferation of workplace charging points. This initiative helped to secure a 264% increase in electric vehicle purchases in 2015 along with 24 new workplace charging points.

Secondly, Energy Cork has led the promotion of a proposal to create *Ireland's Greenest Bus Fleet*⁵ in Cork. The initiative proposes the procurement and roll-out of over 100 green buses (Compressed Natural Gas, Electric or Hybrid) in Cork.

Environment & Climate Change

Energy Cork and its members are committed to fostering an energy industry in Ireland, and particularly in Cork, that places sustainability and environmental protection at the forefront of everything that we do. Indeed, **Energy Cork sees environmental challenges, in particular the mitigation of and adaption to climate change, as opportunities for innovation and economic growth rather than barriers to growth.**

Energy Cork runs numerous events promoting the sustainable generation and use of energy. For example, Energy Cork ran Ireland's first (and so far largest) conference focussed on the potential of Solar PV to contribute to the achievement of our sustainable energy goals. *Ireland's Solar Energy Future*⁶, held in January 2016 attracted over 350 attendees to Cork.

Energy Cork has also played an active role in the activities of Climate-KIC, the EU's leading climate change programme, in Ireland.

If you would like any further information on anything contained in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Kieran Lettice
Cluster Manager
Energy Cork

⁴ <http://www.energycork.ie/index.php/portfolio/drive4zero/>

⁵ <http://www.energycork.ie/index.php/portfolio/irelands-greenest-bus-fleet/>

⁶ <http://www.energycork.ie/index.php/portfolio/irelands-solar-energy-future-conference/>