

CrowdPower



Support Tools for Community
Renewable Energy

PROJECT AIM

The project aims to co-develop online support tools with community energy groups which will enable such groups to connect, explore the technologies suited to their area, outline the key development steps and ultimately provide the framework for communities to raise finance to support a renewable energy project

PROJECT OUTLINE

We anticipate that the software which will be co-developed with community groups will ultimately have three functions:



CONNECT – enable users to identify and connect with those in the community that are interested in developing a renewable energy project



ASSESS – enable communities to determine the cost and benefit of different renewable energy projects in their area based on local resources, current technologies and financial supports



FINANCE – for a community's vision to become a reality finance will be needed. The online support tool will include a crowdfunding platform to enable investment from within, and beyond, the community

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The aim of this project is to design software tools for the community with the community. Through engagement with community energy groups we will:

- Ensure that the design and functionality of the software meets the needs of the end user
- Explore the drivers and barriers to the development of community renewable energy projects
- Explore how this support tool could be used to develop partnerships within and beyond the community



THE ROLE OF ENERGY COMMUNITIES IN OUR ENERGY TRANSITION

Dara Ó Maoldhia, Chairperson Comharchumann Fuinnimh Oileáin Árann Teoranta, describes best why we are doing this – “The community of the Aran Islands have been examining the options for renewable energy technologies over the past number of years and have found the technical and legislative red tape difficult to navigate. We feel that the provision of a set of online tools to assess the options, signpost the main development steps, organise a business and raise finance will be invaluable.”

The role of energy communities in our energy transition has been outlined in Ireland’s Energy White Paper (2015) as described by the Minister for Energy at the time – “...the energy transition...will see the energy system change from one that is almost exclusively Government and utility led, to one where citizens and communities will increasingly be participants in renewable energy generation, distribution and energy efficiency.” In their Submission to the Oireachtas the Citizen Assembly on ‘How the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change’ 100% of the Members recommended that “the State should act to ensure the greatest possible levels of community ownership in all future renewable energy projects” while Ireland’s Climate Action Plan (2019) which was written based on this submission outlined how we need to “Open up opportunity for community participation in renewable generation.”

We anticipate that the tool we set out to co-design with communities who have been on this journey already will facilitate other communities in their energy transition and in exploring their options for community owned renewable energy.

WHO'S INVOLVED

This project is funded by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The SEAI's Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) network is made up of over 400 communities around Ireland who are interested in community energy.

PROJECT TEAM

- Dr. Niall Dunphy **Principal Investigator**
UCC School of Engineering, MaREI & CPPU, ERI
- Dr. Cian Desmond UCC MaREI
- Dr. Gerard Mullally UCC Department of Sociology & Criminology
- Dr. Rob Gleasure Copenhagen Business School – Department of Digitalization

RESEARCHERS

Elizabeth Creed – UCC Department of Sociology & Criminology, MaREI

Liz is undertaking this research while working towards her PhD in Sociology after working across many sectors, and within the community, as researcher, project manager and climate action advocate.

Donal Hunt – UCC School of Engineering, MaREI

Donal, a Computer Scientist with a background in datacenter deployment, GIS and open data is working towards his PhD. He is a member of The Institution of Engineering and Technology and of Engineers Ireland.

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