Response: Draft National Energy and Climate Plan

Introduction
Ireland needs ambitious, sustained and coordinated action to accelerate the transition away from environmentally devastating fossil fuels and to build our renewable capacity. A cohesive and visionary policy agenda inclusive of public and private investment, taxation, financial supports for householders and small businesses, legislation, planning processes, and regulation must be actioned to this end.

Such urgent and radical action is required in response to the threats posed by climate change across a wide range of fields with transport, agriculture and energy being key sectors. Renewable electricity generation will of course be a key element in the transition from fossil fuels in the areas of transport and heat also. Agriculture too will plays its part in the developing our new renewable energy mix of the future.

Sinn Féin believe we must prioritise investment in the achievement and delivery of a wider portfolio of energy sources including a much greater emphasis on off-shore wind and the sustainable replacements such as biogas and to a lesser extent biomass, for fossil fuels currently underpinning dispatchable power.

Sustainable and Secure Energy
Fossil fuels are both finite and environmentally devastating. The carbon emissions produced by the burning of fossil fuels is contributing to global temperatures rising. This is resulting in climate change which threatens invaluable natural ecosystems and increases the frequency of extreme weather events. Ireland is bound by EU obligations to increase our renewable electricity production as part of efforts to curtail the global temperature increase. With our current energy mix and on current government policy trajectories we will miss our targets.
Our electricity production is over dependent on imports, especially imports via Britain. Transports is also heavily reliant on imported fossil fuels. Risks to our security of supply are thus heightened further by Brexit. With the ESRI estimating, that as a result of our very great dependence on Britain for gas, in the case of an exceptional international event, the daily economic cost to the South of Ireland of any prolonged interruption to Ireland’s gas supply would range from €350 million to €640 million with 80% of this accounted for by lost electricity.

An insecure energy supply threatens economic growth and many companies cite availability of a secure and predictably priced energy supply as a pre-requisite for investment. It is imperative that we achieve the right renewable energy mix including a combination of not just intermittent sources but also renewable sources that can supply dispatchable power. Only with this mix can we displace fossil fuels and reduce emissions.

This must be a balanced portfolio of renewable energy. This will include developing offshore wind and solar alongside biogas, biomass which also have the potential to create jobs in Ireland and could provide an alternative or additional source of income for farming communities. Coupled with this we need to develop and install storage technology. We also see the need to develop microgeneration. The potential in microgeneration although difficult to fully quantify, with self-consumption, battery back-up and supply to the gird, will also form an important part of the energy mix going forward.

**Conclusion**

Sinn Féin’s twin priorities are that Irelands energy be:

(1) Secure and Sustainable and
(2) Affordable

We advocate the development of a diverse portfolio of energy sources combining both intermittent and dispatchable energy with key roles for sources and technologies including biofuels, wind, solar, wave and tidal, hydroelectricity, microgeneration, greater storage and interconnection.

This new more secure, sustainable and affordable energy mix is achievable. It would replace the use of coal, peat and oil for electricity production and it would also significantly cut the use of the finite fossil fuel natural gas.
The accelerated transition to low carbon, climate-friendly renewable energy is achieved by redirecting public, semi-state and private investment into developing and deploying this new energy mix; and by supporting householders, communities, farmers and small businesses with a broader range of grants and supports enabling them to both reduce and produce the energy we need.

Yours Sincerely,
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