

Climate Change Now a Hot Topic



Given the extreme heat of last few weeks, conversations about climate change are becoming increasingly mainstream – and necessarily so.

By coincidence, in the past week, Environment Minister Denis Naughten has launched a ‘Call for Applications’ under a new €500 million Climate Action Fund

The Climate Action Fund will support initiatives from the public and private sector that will help the State reach its climate and energy targets. The deadline for applications is October 1st.

The Government has described this fund as “one of the most innovative measures as part of Project Ireland 2040, where half a billion euro for projects that will have a practical and profound effect on the future for this country”.

That all sounds terrific on a press release but what will this mean in reality? Said Minister Naughten: “This fund is to support larger scale projects that would otherwise not be developed without this support from Government. The opportunities are endless and I would encourage people to be creative and solution focussed.”

The Government has suggested several fund-worthy projects, including “electrifying bus fleets, to expanding electric vehicles’ charging infrastructure, or the development of district heating projects in our cities, to using farm and food waste as a source of renewable energy. The Fund is about a new way of problem solving in urban and rural communities, and in business and enterprise on climate and our environment”.

The types of projects that may be supported also include:

- * Renewable energy projects,
- * Energy efficiency projects,
- * District heating projects as well as
- * Local infrastructure projects (including electric vehicle charging networks) along with projects that will “enhance the standards of environmental protection”.

Said Minister Naughten: “Effective change is putting the levers for climate action into people’s hands and the Climate Action Fund provides an unprecedented opportunity for communities, organisations and individuals. It is a blank canvas. The Fund is about supporting projects that will decrease Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions and increase our use of sustainable energy. The scale of the Climate Action Fund demonstrates support by the Government in achieving a sustainable, low-carbon society.” Tidal power is certainly an area which needs to be expanded by the relevant Irish stakeholders and it remains a grossly under-debated subsection of the wider renewable energy sphere. We understand that there was due to be a major EU-backed developed off the Welsh coast near Swansea (with interest at one point from German energy firm Siemens) but this may now not proceed under its previously envisaged financial model due to Brexit. Might there be an opening for someone interested in a project of similar scale in Irish waters? On a smaller scale, the River Suir is renowned for its strong current and one wonders should it be subjected to a tidal area survey by academics? It might be an ideal area for WIT researchers to examine as we continue to seek no means of fuelling our vehicles and powering our homes, offices and factories.