



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **IRELAND'S CARBON FOOTPRINT IN A DIFFERENT FIELD COMPARED TO EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURS**

Midwest could be presented with €42 million carbon levy bill



**IRELAND, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2007** – A leading renewable energy association has claimed that the mid-west is living beyond its means, in terms of its impact on the environment, and could shortly face a multi-million Euro bill in carbon levy. Renewable Energy Skills has based the claim on figures from the European Environment Agency showing that Ireland currently has a Carbon Footprint of 5.0 global hectares per person, more than double the global average.

The Ecological Footprint or Carbon Footprint is an environmental accounting tool that measures the land area required to support an individual, business, community or nation, providing for its needs and absorbing its wastes. It is quantified by calculating the land area required to produce the resources needed and dispose safely of wastes produced.

*“Energy emissions in the mid-west currently exceed the Kyoto target”,* stated Cllr. Johnny Flynn, Chairperson of RES and Ennis Town Councillor.

*He continued, “One of our most significant environmental impacts is the emission of greenhouse gases, which contribute to global climate change. Ireland ratified the Kyoto Protocol to address climate change on the 31 May 2002, along with all other EU Member States, and is internationally legally bound to meet emission reduction targets set out. Under Kyoto, our commitment is to limit our greenhouse gas emissions to 13% above 1990 levels. Currently, Ireland’s greenhouse gases emissions stand at 25% above 1990 levels. Clearly, more work needs to be done.”*

*“If the people of the mid west continue to ignore the challenge facing them, they will be presented with a EUR42 million bill in 2010”,* added Cllr. Flynn.

*He indicated, “Energy emissions in Clare are above the Kyoto target by 300,000 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). This figure could rise to over 490,000 tonnes by 2010 leaving the County to face a bill of over EUR17 million in carbon levy. Meanwhile, Limerick County and City energy emissions are above the Kyoto target by 409,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. By 2010, Limerick could be 713,000 tonnes over and face a bill of over EUR25 million in carbon levy.”*

Meanwhile, The Limerick Clare Energy Agency, which has previously supported Renewable Energy Skills initiatives, indicated that a number of target actions aimed at reducing carbon emissions were included in the recently launched Government White Paper.

*“Some of the targets for renewable energy production will be well within the abilities of coastal counties such as Limerick and Clare”,* stated Mr. Pat Stephens, Manger of LCEA.

Mr. Stephens, who has worked in the field of Building Services Design & Energy Management for over 15 years and in the construction industry for over 25 years, added, *“To achieve our National targets, some local targets will have to be more ambitious. This includes the provision of biomass firing at Moneypoint generating station by 2010, the promotion of IS 393 Energy Management Standard for the region’s SMEs, 10% Biofuels penetration by 2020, 100% and the production of 500 MW of installed ocean energy by 2020, 400 MW from Combined Heat & Power (CHP) by 2010 and 15% of electricity from renewables by 2010.”*

Other targets outlined by the Limerick Clare Energy Agency include the use of Pure Plant Oil (PPO) in Local Authority & Public Bodies vehicle fleets, a thorough review of the National Building Regulations in 2008, Eirgrid's takeover of the Electricity Transmission Grid, the introduction of Smart Meters for all electricity consumers over next 5 years, the establishment of an Inter-Departmental agency to tackle fuel Poverty, the publishing of an Energy Efficiency Action Plan by June 2007, a National Biofuels obligation for fuel suppliers of 5% by 2009, and EUR150 million investment in Energy Research, Development & Innovation (RD&I).

Renewable Energy Skills stated that the ambitious targets set out by the White Paper must be met with the full compliance of all sectors of the economy with the commitments, set out under the National Climate Change Strategy. Under this strategy, the Government plans to have 15% of electricity generated from renewable sources by 2010 and 33% by 2020.

According to Dick Whelan, Project Manager with Renewable Energy Skills and Managing Director of Almir Business Ltd., *"The Strategy places increased responsibility on individuals and organizations to manage their environmental impacts, and overall contribution to climate change. The increased use of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, biomass and hydropower will contribute to how we, as a region, can reduce our carbon emissions. In addition to this, the Government has committed to the continued provision of grants for renewable energy heating under the Greener Homes Scheme. Renewable energy, therefore, is an important component of Ireland's climate change strategy. By adopting a more energy efficient attitude, the Midwest region can meet its Kyoto commitments."*

Meanwhile, Renewable Energy Skills will hold an event promoting the installation and use of renewable energy heating systems in Ennis on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2007. The second annual Clare Renewable Energy Show will be held in the Glór Irish Music Centre and will be opened by national television presenter Duncan Stewart, who is an award-winning architect and specialist in ecological design and energy. He is a keen supporter and promoter of the Renewable Energy Skills Group and will also give the keynote presentation in the seminar programme. The show opens at 1pm and ends at 6pm. Admission for Adults is EUR5 while children and youths are free (visit [www.renewableenergy.ie](http://www.renewableenergy.ie)).

Commenting ahead of the Energy Show, Mr. Stewart said, *"We are facing very difficult times as fossil fuel and electricity prices will rise dramatically probably doubling, as global supply of energy demand outstrips the supply of oil and gas. We also need reduce our*

*consumption of these fuels in order to reduce and comply with European requirements on CO2 emissions. Irish homes currently produce 26% of the total CO2 emissions. At present our homes are very poor in meeting energy standards to keep them warm, comfortable and healthy. We need to improve our insulation standards, make homes more air tight, improve ventilation systems, such as heat recovery and ventilation and especially to change from oil, gas and coal to Renewable Energy sources.”*

Mr. Stewart explained that Ireland was in a transition time and that homeowners now had a lot of choice as regards heat appliances and solar collection systems. He expressed concern, however, that the installation of such systems was being hampered.

He added, *“The SEI Greener Homes Scheme is a great incentive to make the change but unfortunately the current installer list does not reflect a level of competency. This needs to be urgently addressed to avoid defective installation especially when it is taxpayers’ money. At present over 5000 plumbers need to be trained. We are lucky to have a network like Renewable Energy Skills who have trained over 350 individuals in 2006. I have witnessed the group grow from a local into a national body for the Renewable Energy Heating industry. The members are a great source of information and support to each other from which the consumer can only benefit.”*

*“The opportunities make it an exciting time. The sooner one makes the decision to install Renewable Energy systems the sooner that savings can be made. For example solar equipment should have a working life of at least 20-25 years and the cost benefits will probably far outweigh the SSIA scheme”,* concluded the well-known broadcaster.

The **Renewable Energy Skills Network** was set up in 2004 to provide training and support to plumbing and heating contractors and related trades and professionals involved in the design, specification, installation and maintenance of Renewable Energy Heating Systems. Over the past 3 and a half years, the network has provided its Renewable Energy training courses all over Ireland. The project is funded by member companies and Accel. Accel is an initiative of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and is managed by Skillnets Services Ltd on its behalf. The programme is funded by the European Social Fund and the National Training Fund. Website [www.acceltraining.com](http://www.acceltraining.com).