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Bioenergy and the Western Region

Stimulating Bioenergy Development through Local Authority Policy and Action

Helen McHenry,

Western Development Commission

Claregalway, 25th September 2012

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The RASLRES LA project

- LAs are vital actors for change within the renewable energy sector leading on 'thinking' and 'delivery' of practice within the sector. The leadership roles translate into four action areas including:
 - Design and development of policy frameworks
 - Review of opportunities for public procurement of bioenergy technology
 - Capacity to deliver and participate in a range of supportive energy projects
 - Capacity to provide guidance and act as renewable energy advocate

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RASLRES and the Local Authorities

- RASLRES working with LAs to assist them in assessing the benefits of bioenergy and the opportunities for them
- Representative group nominated to liaise with RASLRES
- Provided key inputs into this work- Thanks!

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Action Plan for LAs

- Role of RASLRES:
 - Specialist expertise
 - Co-ordinate regional process
 - Engage stakeholders e.g. policy makers, SEAI, EU forums
- Action Areas:
 - Policy development
 - Public procurement- model contract
 - Energy projects

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Key achievements to date

- Policy development:
 - Review of CDPs
 - Report with recommendations for actions
- Public procurement:
 - County site visits and reports
 - Regional synthesis of options and issues
 - ESCO model contract
- Capacity building:
 - Two LA workshops (7th Oct, 15th Nov), public workshop
 - Report on EU funding options

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What is bioenergy?

- Derived from recently living organisms
- Biomass Group:
 - Purpose grown fuels
 - Forestry residue
 - Agricultural residue
 - Waste
- Most abundant and commercially ready in Western Region are forest residues and waste

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Bioenergy- An Overview

- By 2020 bioenergy expected to provide **44%** of Irish Renewable energy (61% of European)
- Unquestionably important but:
 - Which type of bioenergy is most appropriate?
 - Which type of energy?-Heat, Electricity or transport?
 - How best can we deliver it?
- Bioenergy drivers:
 - Energy prices
 - EU Renewable energy policies and binding targets
 - Wider benefits

Benefits of Bioenergy

■ Environmental

- Better use of natural resources, climate change benefits, reduced waste, biodiversity opportunities

■ Social

- Tends to operate at local level giving local employment, improved farm profitability, rural diversification, energy security, rural regeneration

■ Economic

- Net gain in employment, new businesses, diverse skill requirements, improved trade balance locally and nationally, decreased energy costs

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■ Policy Hierarchy

■ EU

- RES (Renewable Energy Source) directive
- Energy efficiency directives, procurement, climate change

■ Irish Policy

- NREAP, REFIT, white paper, carbon tax, climate change strategy
- Policy vacuum?

■ Regional and local policies –County Development Plans

- UK and NI policies- Renewable Heat Incentive

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Bioenergy- the LA role

- Meeting the national RE target will require Local Action
- County strategies and actions will be necessary
- RASLRES highlights best practice among counties.

- Bioenergy best RE option for delivering heat
- Particularly cost competitive in areas off the natural gas network

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Bioenergy – the LA role

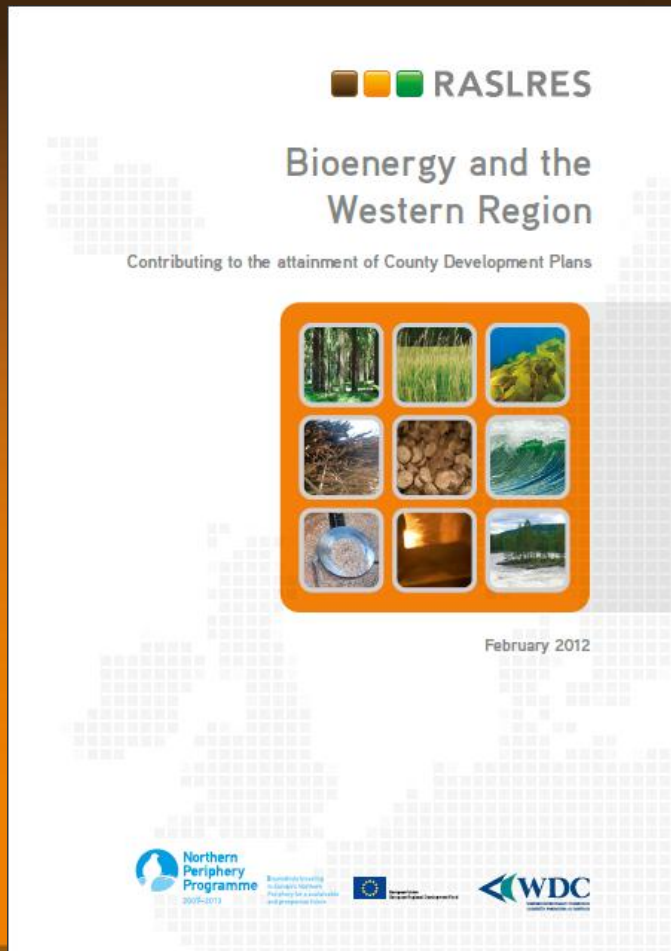
- Create the vision for bioenergy- specific to the county
- Develop Organisational structures to deliver change
- Set out clear pathway to achieving vision
- Implement the changes
- Monitor evaluate and adjust

Bioenergy – the local role

- Key concepts: Clarity and Consistency
- Make it easy to do business
- Provide practical leadership in the county
- Use bioenergy

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How does this report help?



- Context
- Review of best practice in the region
- Laid out as for a CDP – cut and paste
- Suggestions for supporting, delivering and enhancing CDP policies

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Review of County Development Plans

Bioenergy area:	Which part of the bioenergy chain is affected?
CDP addresses:	What is the CDP trying to achieve, or typical statement
Role/impact on bioenergy:	For this CDP section, what is the likely impact on bioenergy development, or what role can bioenergy play?
Current best practice in CDPs:	Relevant quotes taken directly out of the CDPs demonstrating how this is currently best approached.
Possible measures:	How to gain the benefits bioenergy offers.

Vision

Bioenergy area:	All areas
CDP addresses:	Leader in RE generation
Role/impact on bioenergy:	Bioenergy would have to be a significant part of the renewable energy portfolio to achieve this vision
Example of current best practice in CDPs:	Target of 50MW of renewable energy electricity capacity (Mayo)
Possible measures:	Break vision statement into priorities and targets: e.g. the county will maximise use of its available bioenergy resources to exceed national targets for RE heat (12%)and transport (10%)

Energy

Bioenergy area:	Levering benefits of bioenergy for the county
CDP addresses:	Economic and employment development by developing renewable energy supply
Role/impact on bioenergy:	Bioenergy provides greatest local employment and new business impact of all renewable energies, hence should be boosted by this provided this is known within the council and the Western Region
Example of current best practice in CDPs:	To contribute to the economic development and enhanced employment opportunities in the County by facilitating the development of a self-sustaining, secure, reliable and efficient renewable energy supply and storage for the County. (Clare)
Possible measures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote benefits of bioenergy both internally in the council and externally in the wider business and domestic communities.• Set targets for bioenergy deployment.• Acknowledge within CDP text positive impact bioenergy can have on employment.

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Regeneration and Renewal

Bioenergy area:	Market development and social acceptance
CDP addresses:	Urban renewal and social housing
Role/impact on bioenergy:	These are prime targets for district heating which can be most cost effectively (in most cases) supplied by bioenergy
Example of current best practice in CDPs:	Use renewable energy in social housing where appropriate (Mayo) Actively encourage the integration of micro renewable energy sources into the design and construction of single and multiple housing developments throughout the County. (Galway County)
Possible measures:	Require all urban renewal and social housing developments to consider biomass district heating and install infrastructure to allow connection to a district heating network.

Agricultural Development

Bioenergy area:	Market development & social acceptance
CDP addresses:	Develop alternative farm enterprises
Role/impact on bioenergy:	Bioenergy can provide many options for alternative farm and rural enterprises
Example of current best practice in CDPs:	RCC will facilitate and encourage the development of alternative farm enterprises and farm diversification proposals that support the development of alternative or additional rural enterprises which supplement farm incomes and regenerate the rural economy. (Roscommon)
Possible measures:	Specifically state within CDP that bioenergy is considered a viable, and sustainable option, and that additional measures will be taken by the council to develop the market for biomass to facilitate such alternative farm enterprise

Climate Change

Bioenergy area:	Market development and social acceptance
CDP addresses:	Facilitate a low carbon economy
Role/impact on bioenergy:	Encourages bioenergy development as, along with other renewable energies , it is nearly carbon neutral
Example of current best practice in CDPs:	Table of renewable energy resources available (Sligo).
Possible measures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set targets for bioenergy development (WR or county)• Set targets for bioenergy in council owned or leased properties• Implement green public procurement practices and consider economic, social and environmental benefits of projects

Visual Amenity

Bioenergy area:	Resource (and also conversion)
CDP addresses:	Protect visual amenity of the landscape
Role/impact on bioenergy:	Reduces area for bioenergy resource development. Can create uncertainty
Example of current best practice in CDPs:	Oppose forestry proposals which would negatively impact on the views from the following approach roads to Glenveagh National Park (roads named)
Possible measures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publish maps of areas off limits to forestry for this reason• Publish clear criteria for decision making in respect to forestry and energy corps• Publish clear criteria for decision making on conversion facilities)

Local Policy- to deliver now

1. Update CDPs and provide supporting material (e.g. maps)
2. Set a vision and specific time-limited targets, backed by the CDB; County Manager and other senior managers.
3. Specify and assign a renewable energy role, with particular mandate regarding bioenergy.
4. Procure according to the triple bottom line (economic, social, environmental criteria)
5. Communication - set policy criteria; assessment criteria; assessment timetables; maintain dialogue; raise awareness.

To consider in the future

1. A standard, regional approach to bioenergy
2. Streamlining planning processes for renewable energy.
3. Investigate development of financing options
4. Further information, especially maps
5. Investigate additional approaches – e.g. co-ordination among counties

Possible planning measures

- Developing renewable energy plans for larger population clusters
- Developing maps of areas considered most suitable for bioenergy crop development (locating them close to demand points)
- Promoting mixed developments to promote District Heating (through an anchor heat load and lesser loads).
- Develop local area plans for bioenergy development within the Region.
- Provide a clear statement on what is considered bioenergy
- Training on what planners need to know to properly assess renewable energy applications.

Checklists for planners

- They can provide clarity and more certainty
- Make it easier to do business
- Save time (and money) for applicants and planners
- Provide transparency
- Help meet EU guidelines for administrative procedures under RES directive
- Successfully used in Galway County Development Plan

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Checklists for planners

Policy ED1: Small scale enterprises, which applicants seek to establish in rural areas in which the applicant is resident which can be accommodated in existing farm buildings or can be established on brownfield sites and which are not suitable or would not be appropriate on industrial or commercially zoned lands in towns and villages will be considered on individual merit. Criteria that will be considered will include:

1. Scale of development (number of employees, scale of buildings required)
2. Nature of the development
3. Compatibility of the development with the rural economic profile (supportive of part time farming families)
4. "Good Neighbour" principles (compatibility with agricultural land uses and impact on existing residences)
5. Impact on road network, road capacity and traffic levels.
6. General suitability in the unserved rural area.
7. Substantiate need to locate in rural area.
8. Consideration of social, economic and environmental impacts.
9. Re-use of existing buildings.
10. Compliance with the policies of the NRA and Galway County Council with regard to access onto National Roads.

Local Authority Actions-Planning

- LAs can help to drive growth and deliver more bioenergy projects through:
 - Clarity in process- planning, zoning and permitting
 - Confidence in applicant time frames
 - Consistency in decisions

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Local Authority Actions

- Make it easy to do business
- Include bioenergy in the vision
- Provide transparent criteria and timetables within and accompanying CDPS
- Develop an internal delivery structure
- Cooperation among councils
- Information for elected representatives

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- Making it happen- opportunities and obstacles
 - Planning
 - Driving the bioenergy agenda
 - Securing resources/commitment
- Best forum for linking counties- sharing knowledge and information?
- Developing check lists- Galway CoCo?
- Working together

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