

The Loop Head Energy Action Partnership (LEAP) is launched: building local renewable energy expertise

This community-led project works with its participants to understand the components of the energy revolution enough to master its potential as they face up to the many economic, social and environmental challenges in rural Ireland. The project is developed in partnership with the University of Flensburg, Germany, from whom a team of researchers will be based in Carrigaholt for 5 weeks until the 1st March.

An overview of the project

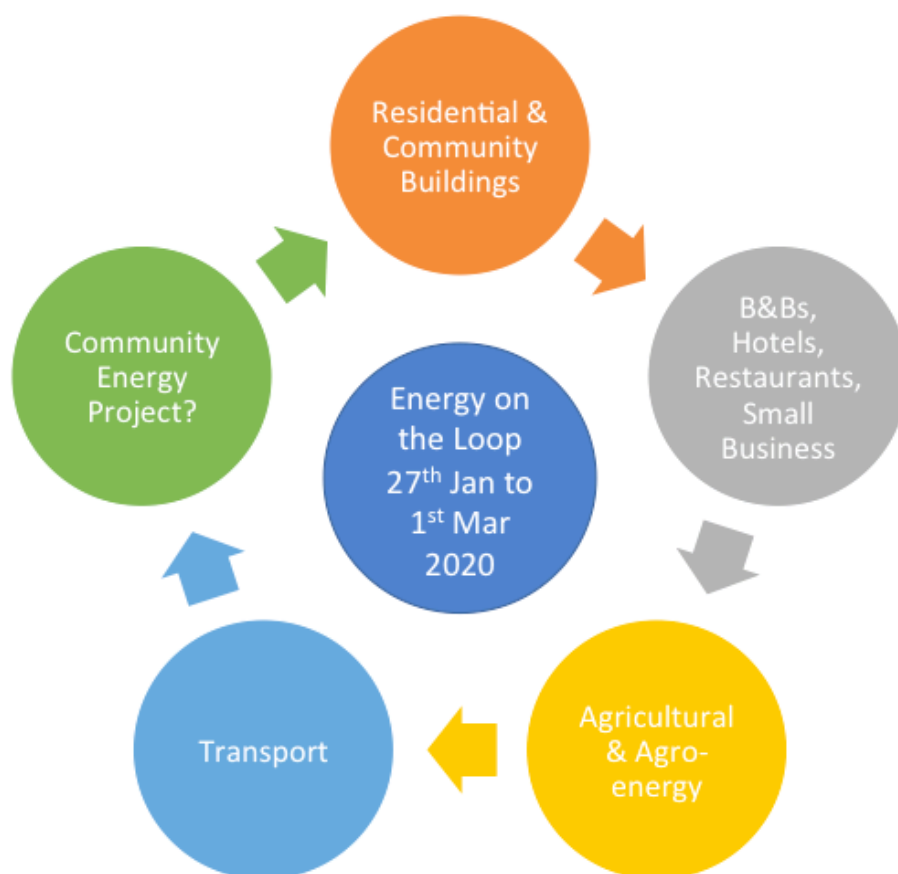
An initial task for LEAP will be the generation of a basic energy-balance model showing energy demand on the Loop Head peninsula. It will also document how the energy was generated and its environmental and economical costs. This will be used to understand the existing energy reality and will then form a basis to explore scenarios of potential different energy balances on the peninsula. Using this, we can see how energy import can be reduced if identified renewables were added, and its effect on economics and environment. The project will also highlight areas where community or economic activities could be supported due to the availability of cheaper and sustainable energy (if and when it is cheaper and sustainable).

Five sectors for research focus

A preliminary research plan on different energy-related sectors is being developed within the partnership of the Flensburg University's team and the Loop Head community, Co. Clare, Ireland.

The sectors being looked at are:

1. Residential & Community Buildings,
2. B&B, Hotels, Restaurants and Small Businesses,
3. Agriculture & Agro-Energy,
4. Transport,
5. Community Energy Projects.



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Common steps for each of the 5 sectors

- Document the energy balance (from an economic, environmental and community perspective).
- Identify suitable technologies that can improve the current energy conditions.
- Identify opportunities for revenue savings, and economic and jobs growth.
- Document what the decision makers for each sector need to know to decide whether to invest into Renewable Energy Technology.
- Raise awareness regarding the current situation in terms of energy costs and related environmental issues and the proposed solutions to optimize energy use in the relevant sector.

Timeframe

- Tuesday 28th January, 9am: partners meet for an initial planning meeting in Loop Head
- Saturday 1st February: 1st Workshop takes place in the Kilkee Bay Hotel from 09:30 till 13:30 where all interested parties will be introduced, the research plan will be finalised and focus groups will be created to make sure the research has the data in time to addresses local needs. Cormac McGinley, of cormaccoasts.com, will support the networking by presenting the some of the secrets behind our coastal cliffs and our birds. This will be topped-off by watching Irelands 1st six nations game.
- Saturday 8th February: 2nd Workshop will explore the journey of community energy via a presentation from the Chairperson of the Aran Energy Coop, Dara Molloy, where we can examine together their journey over the past 8 years. There will also be a presentation from SEAI's Sustainable Energy Communities Programme manager, Ruth Buggie, on how they support initiatives in the community. Q&As throughout.
- Saturday 29th February: A seminar presenting the findings of the research and planning the steps going forward.

Background

This project is being facilitated by Astoneco Management in a partnership with Flensburg University from Germany, Loop Head Tourism and the local community development organisations from Carrigaholt, Kilballyowen and Kilkee together with local residents, business owners, and individuals. The partnership will enlarge as the program advances and as interest is shown.

This partnership is part of a larger initiative to combat a population decline of 30% in the Loop Head area, which includes the development of sustainable tourism and a sustainable development strategy under a vision of 'a place you love to be in'.

For more information contact John Aston at office@astoneco.com or any of the partners.