

Strategic Plan Community Edition



"Climate change is a fundamental problem that we must solve and not merely pass on to the generations to come... We can't let our children and grandchildren look back on this critical period in time and say that we failed them."

Mary Robinson

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Inishowen SEC

"The ultimate hidden truth of the world is that it is something we make, and could just as easily make differently."

David Graeber

About

Established in 2019, Inishowen Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) is focused on transforming the energy landscape and promoting a just transition in the region. In 2021, they launched an Energy Master Plan, outlining opportunities for community-led renewable energy.

Work by the SEC includes support to retrofit homes, evaluation of renewable electricity projects, Decarbonising Zone status for Carndonagh, and support for the ECO Carn Biodiversity Plan. The SEC also won the 2021 SEAI Inspirational Energy Community Award.

In 2022, the SEC secured funding from Enterprise Ireland's REISS program to accelerate these innovative projects and set ambitious future targets. ConsortiaCo and Amicitia partnered with the SEC to develop long-term plans for success. This community edition summarises the project's progress, long-term vision, and the transformative potential of regional community energy initiatives.

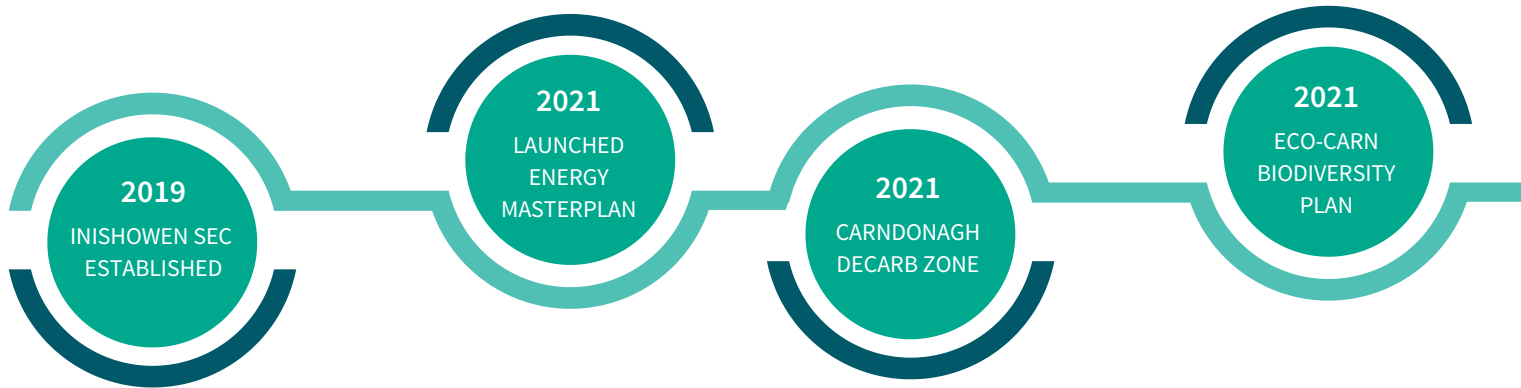
By proactively addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis, the SEC aims to enhance resilience and create a more sustainable future. Community energy projects promise economic, social, and environmental benefits that will enrich livelihoods across the region. Community members are encouraged review this document and join this transformative and ambitious initiative.



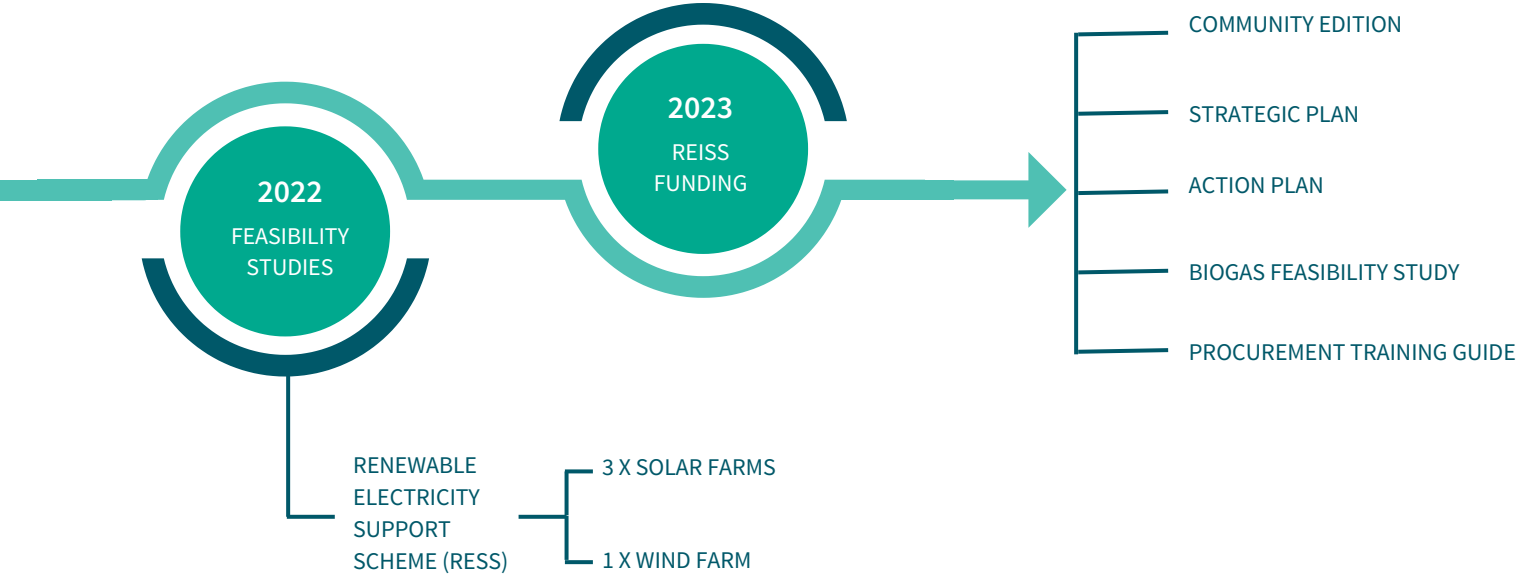
"A 'just transition' means moving to a more sustainable economy in a way that's fair to everyone, including people working in polluting industries."

Greenpeace

Key Achievements



Key Achievements





Vision

By 2033, the Inishowen Peninsula will have transformed into an inspiring, self-sustaining community. It will be renowned for its innovative, participatory, inclusive, and resilient spirit, achieved by integrating social well-being, environmental protection, and economic prosperity.

This vision will come to life through collaboration that identifies new opportunities and creates social businesses across the region. The transformation will be driven by the unique cultural identity and history of Inishowen, serving as a model sustainable community for others to follow.

Collective Effort

Community-owned power creates local energy solutions and strengthens bonds in communities. Shared ownership and collaboration enhance support and pride in the local projects.



Social Returns

Local power projects generate jobs, enhance well-being, address energy poverty, reinvest profits, and educate on renewables and sustainability.



Community Power

Economic Advantage

Community-owned power bolsters the local economy, lowers energy costs, reduces dependence on imported fuel, and attracts investment.

Environmental Impact

Local power projects advance clean energy, curb emissions, safeguard the environment, and inspire other communities for a greener future.





Community Engagement

"Listen to everything all the time and
remind yourself when you are not listening."

Pauline Oliveros

Case Study

The SEAI Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme provides free energy efficiency upgrades to eligible homeowners. The scheme covers insulation, draught-proofing, energy-efficient lighting, and energy advice.

Inishowen Development Partnership (IDP), part of the SEC, facilitated this first successful retrofit of a 1970s bungalow in Buncrana, providing assistance throughout the application process. This project demonstrates the SEC's positive impact, making homes warmer, healthier, and cheaper to heat amidst rising energy costs.

The Government's Climate Action Plan aims to retrofit 500,000 homes by 2030. So far, 28,800 homes have been improved, but more are needed to reach climate goals. Inishowen's housing stock, mostly built between 1919 and 2010, offers ample retrofit opportunities.

Inishowen SEC proposes community-driven retrofit solutions that will create benefits like job creation, skill development, and improved living standards. Retrofitting programs decrease energy consumption, support national climate change efforts, and contribute to a greener, more sustainable future with equitable economic growth.



Community Engagement

Inishowen SEC are part of Ireland's Sustainable Energy Communities Network. With over 700 groups nationwide, this network unites individuals from various backgrounds, promoting environmental responsibility, energy efficiency, and renewable solutions.

Community members contribute across various roles, from technical expertise, education, outreach, project management, fundraising, policy advocacy, to community engagement.

The Inishowen SEC has embraced this collaborative approach since 2019, developing projects that can offer new opportunities and create a positive impact. This approach to community engagement helped to inform their long-term strategic and action plans.

In February 2023, community members participated in three co-creation workshops covering agriculture, youth training, employment, and cross-sector collaboration. Conversations focused on Inishowen's past, present, and future in a climate emergency.

Graphic harvesting gathered ideas, establishing a shared language to visualise group aspirations. Informed by conversations and visuals, strategic and action plans were developed. The Inishowen SEC is committed to maintaining a flexible response to climate action, ensuring everyone can contribute to future projects.



Community Engagement

The first workshop, A Just Transition for the Agricultural Sector, gathered farmers and support agencies to discuss agriculture's future amid climate and biodiversity crises. Farmers expressed concerns about government and EU policies affecting their sector without fully understanding the important role they play managing the land.

Current policies and an unsustainable reliance on subsidies create a challenging work environment, discouraging young people from farming and leading to larger-scale industrial farming with negative environmental impacts.

Participants shared knowledge and experiences, discussing what works well in the sector. Supportive communities enable farmers to collaborate and improve practices. Traditional farming values, modern technology, and community support are avenues to build upon for a sustainable future.

Farmers are crucial in promoting a circular economy. Progressive policies and funding should support them to adopt sustainable practices like agroforestry and precision farming.

In a circular economy, farmers can reduce waste, recycle resources, adopt sustainable livestock management, and efficiently use resources. Local collaboration can identify challenges, opportunities, and develop strategies, providing capacity-building and training resources. Community-led solutions, promoted by the Inishowen SEC, are essential for a just transition, supporting farmers without compromising their economic security or well-being.

A supportive environment with access to knowledge, resources, and peer networks is vital for empowering change. Any new solutions must safeguard farmers' heritage and way of life while promoting sustainability for the next generation.



Community Engagement

The second workshop focused on Youth Training & Employment Pathways, vital to build capacity and implement climate action plans. Participants discussed the region's infrastructure deficit and 'brain drain' due to youth migration, posing generational challenges.

Various agencies, businesses, and support organisations are collaborating to identify alternative solutions. Successful existing programs, such as apprenticeships, virtual learning environments, and recognition of prior learning, can serve as a foundation for future developments.

Participants envisioned an optimistic future, with Inishowen becoming a Centre of Excellence through the SEC's collective efforts. This transformation can foster vibrant communities, robust networks, and new income streams for local projects.

Knowledge networks facilitate collaboration, idea-sharing, and best practice exchange, strengthening community resilience and adaptability. Participants emphasized the importance of role models—social entrepreneurs, community activists, or environmental leaders—to influence and motivate the next generation. These inspirational figures demonstrate social innovation's power and promote proactive problem-solving and collaborative action.

Role models' successes exemplify the potential of dedication and creative thinking, encouraging young people to embrace social entrepreneurship and community activism. This pursuit of careers and projects can positively impact the region, instilling hope, determination, and ambition to inspire future leaders and drive sustainable progress that will contribute to Inishowen's collective well-being.



Community Engagement

The final workshop on Cross-sector Collaboration brought together stakeholders from local authorities, NGOs, business leaders, community finance, and others interested in promoting regional climate action.

Participants shared personal stories and motivations for embracing change, such as passion for nature and leaving a positive legacy. By understanding these driving factors, they gained insight into individual motivations for action.

Barriers included short-term thinking, regulatory delays, and resistance to change from various sectors. Overcoming these obstacles requires raising awareness, fostering understanding, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders.

Key projects, like a community-led biogas plant, can activate communities by addressing renewable energy needs and spurring economic growth through new businesses and social entrepreneurship.

Discussions across each of the workshops emphasised the potential of community energy projects to drive local action raise and awareness of sustainability. However, navigating challenges and resistance to change requires cross-sector collaboration and community alliances.

The Inishowen SEC is leading the way in forming these networks by presenting a compelling shared vision and uniting stakeholders to bring about a sustainable, carbon-neutral future.





Unlocking Potential

“Together they unlocked potential in one another. They worked hard and played harder, until the work felt like play.”

Walidah Imarisha

Multi-stakeholder Cooperatives

Inishowen SEC will unite consumers, producers, workers, volunteers, and community supporters through a multi-stakeholder cooperative. These cooperatives emphasise shared decision-making with members collaborating towards common goals, often involving sustainability projects.

Cooperatives prioritise fairness in pricing and wages. They differ from traditional businesses, valuing members over exports, growth, and shareholder expectations, resulting in profit distribution and strong community ties. Consequently, cooperatives are gaining popularity as a model for sustainable development.

Across Europe, 1,900 energy cooperatives and 1,250,000 citizens actively participate in the energy transition, promoting inclusivity, fairness, and community engagement. Cooperatives welcome diverse members and value autonomy and independence for effective collaboration.

Joining a multi-stakeholder cooperative project can be transformative for community members. Active participation can help shape a sustainable future, drive innovation, strengthen community bonds, and positively impact the environment and neighbours' well-being.



**MULTI-STAKEHOLDER
CO-OPS**



Build capacity

Capacity building is crucial for the Inishowen SEC to unlock community energy potential in the region. A multi-stakeholder cooperative encourages community involvement, fostering shared ownership and responsibility.



Inishowen SEC Co-op

Inishowen SEC aims to build regional capacity through social businesses, fostering local economic growth, innovation, and opportunities in funding, education, and employment.

Multi-stakeholder cooperatives invite community members to join climate action initiatives while participating in decision-making.

With a more democratic and socially responsible approach, multi-stakeholder cooperatives are not only an effective model for addressing climate change, but also a promising avenue for building a more sustainable and inclusive future.

New businesses

Multi-stakeholder cooperatives can boost local economies and sustainability by supporting social businesses, micro-enterprises that feed into the community energy projects identified by the Inishowen SEC.



New opportunities

Multi-stakeholder cooperatives attract funding, promote social and environmental impact, and foster education, skill development, and professional growth, building resilient networks across the region.

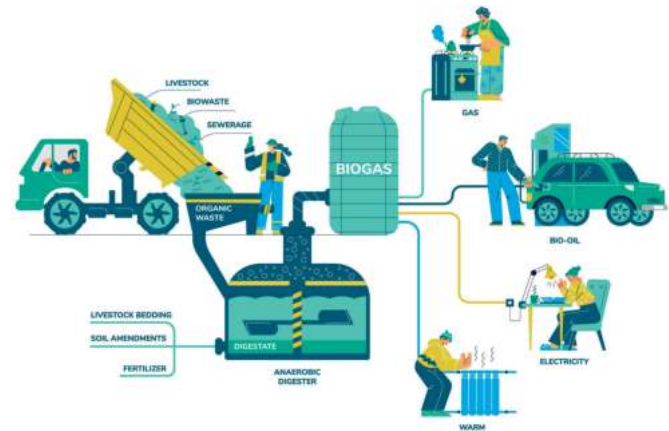


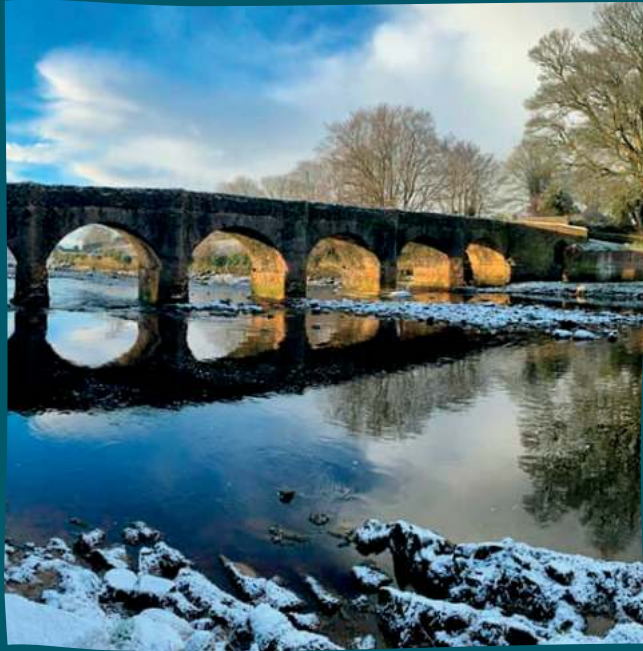
Catalyst Project: Community-led Biogas Plant

A community-owned biogas power plant was identified as the most suitable catalyst project for the Inishowen SEC. Imagine a thriving, sustainable community where local waste is transformed into valuable resources. Collecting waste from households, farms, and industries reduces landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions. The waste is processed through anaerobic digestion, generating biogas and nutrient-rich digestate. The waste is processed through anaerobic digestion, generating biogas and nutrient-rich digestate.

The purified biogas can produce electricity and heat or be upgraded to biomethane for fuel. The digestate serves as an eco-friendly fertiliser reducing the need for chemicals. This project would create local employment opportunities in waste collection, plant operation, and maintenance. Businesses can also benefit from utilising the energy, heat, or biofertiliser produced. As the plant is community-owned, profits can be reinvested locally.

Furthermore, the biogas plant could serve as an educational platform, engaging the community in sustainable waste management and renewable energy practices. By embracing this initiative, the community of Inishowen can create a cleaner, more resilient, and economically vibrant area for current and future generations. Harnessing waste as a resource, the community can transition towards a sustainable, circular economy, enhancing overall well-being and environmental stewardship.





Building Alliances

"Inside the word 'emergency' is 'emerge'; from an emergency new things come forth. The old certainties are crumbling fast, but danger and possibility are sisters."

Rebecca Solnit

Building Alliances

In October 2022, Inishowen SEC joined five other SEC groups at a 'Local Futures' event to share knowledge, discuss collective effort, identify challenges, and explore opportunities. The group highlighted that tackling climate change demands place-based strategies, strong partnerships, citizen involvement, and active state participation to overcome the disconnect between policy creation and implementation.

The event's findings align with this REISS-funded project's objectives. To assist Inishowen SEC and its partners in addressing their challenges, the project has produced:

- A long-term strategic plan for Inishowen SEC to enhance community engagement through improved governance.
- Identification of a range of funds, many at the EU level, requiring collaboration among numerous partners.
- An energy assessment of the region highlighting the significant potential of community energy projects to revitalise the local economy.

By working across community networks and forging new alliances, the Inishowen SEC is well-positioned to realise this potential and achieve its climate action ambitions.



"We all have a moral obligation to do better and support one another as we fight the climate crisis, and we need to do it with great urgency."

Al Gore



Get Involved

“Hope is not optimism, which expects things to turn out well, but something rooted in the conviction that there is good worth working for.”

Seamus Heaney

Call to Action

The Inishowen SEC has laid the groundwork to radically transform the energy landscape of the region. Community-owned energy will unlock a wealth of new opportunities for everyone involved.

Their action plans represent an ambitious and hopeful vision for the future. The SEC now needs people in the community to champion these exciting projects and help bring them to life.

If you're interested in getting involved or seeking more information, please refer to the details provided below.



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This project is delivered with thanks to all members of the SEC, partner companies, funders and members of the Inishowen community.

