2030
CORCA DHUIBHNE
DINGLE PENINSULA

The Community Energy Mentor Training Course

May 2021

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Deirdre de Bhailís, **Brendan Tuohy**; Dingle Creativity and Innovation Hub

Community Energy Mentors 2020 (L-R): Suzanne Murtagh, John Fitzgerald, Joe O'Brien, Jeanne Spillane, Tom Kennedy, Siobhán Dempsey (facilitator), Catríona Fallon, Dinny Galvin, David Garner, Gearóid óCathasaigh, and John Martin (not in photo)

Located in the south west of Ireland, the Dingle Peninsula is defined by the territory to the west of a line connecting Blennerville to Castlemaine and with an area of 583 sq km and extending 48 km into the Atlantic. It has a resident population of 12,764, with 2,500 living in Dingle Town (CSO, Census, 2016). There are 6,989 houses on the Penuinsula, comprised of 5,063 homes and 1,926 second (holiday) homes. Tourism accounts for c. 30% of the local economy.

Background

In March 2018, a meeting was held between representatives of the Dingle Hub and Kerry Education and Training Board (Kerry ETB) to discuss the various initiatives to transition the Dingle Peninsula to a low carbon community and to explore how Kerry ETB might become a partner and help the Dingle Peninsula and, ultimately, County Kerry, to transition to a low carbon society. It was agreed that Kerry ETB, with the support of the Dingle Hub and the wider Corca Dhuibhne/Dingle Peninsula 2030 team, would provide a training course in Dingle for local participants, which would equip them to help, enable and support people (in a factual, non-judgmental manner) to adapt their current energy lifestyles.

A Steering Committee was established in January 2019 with the following members: Sandy McSwiney (Kerry County Council), Anne-Marie Fuller (Kerry Sustainable Energy Co-op), Deirdre de Bhailís and Brendan Tuohy (Dingle Hub), Clare Watson (MaREI), Claire McElligott (ESB Networks), Prof Enda McGovern (Sacred Heart University, USA), Seamus Hoyne (Limerick Institute of Technology), Xavier Dubuisson (SEAI SEC Mentor), and Ian Kilgallon (Gas Networks Ireland). This group met three times over the following eight months.

In mid-2019, after much deliberation about the type and length of course (for more detail see Appendix 2), it was agreed to run a 12-week part-time programme for Community Energy Mentors. Kerry ETB engaged Impact Training to oversee the logistics and delivery of the training.

The course was advertised widely by both Kerry ETB and the Dingle Hub on local and social media, and interviews were held with prospective trainees in early November 2019.

Kerry Education Training Board/Kerry College

Kerry Education Training Board (Kerry ETB) was established in 2013 in place of the former County Kerry Vocational Education Committee (VEC). Its mission is 'to create and promote the development of a lifelong learning society in Kerry, so that all who live there have access to the education and training required to fulfil their potential and to meet their personal, social, cultural, economic and civic needs'.

Kerry ETB has a corporate structure, made up of a democratically appointed committee and a management team. It serves a population of about 147,707 people, and has centres in Tralee, Killarney, Listowel, Castleisland, Causeway, Killorglin, Dingle, Caherciveen, Waterville and Kenmare.

In September 2019, all further education and training provision in Kerry was brought together into one fully integrated college called Kerry College. Existing Kerry ETB centres in Tralee at Monavalley, Clash and Denny Street, and Church Street, Listowel were renamed as campus locations.

Kerry ETB has been very innovative in its mission and has a huge commitment to working closely with its local communities, and helping to prepare these communities, and the learners in them, to avail of the opportunities for jobs and for a better quality of life.

NEW: Community Energy Mentor Course

COURSE INFO

LOCATION:	Údarás na Gaeltachta, Páirc Ghnó an Daingin, Dingle
COURSE DURATION:	12 weeks (Part-time) – 2 days per week (Wednesdays & Thursdays)
START DATE:	13.11.2019

The purpose of this course is to introduce and educate participants to the concepts of energy sustainability, the goals of energy technology assessment, and the promotion of sustainable energy technologies at community level.
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The aim of the course is that participants will gain the knowledge and skills required to manage and assist in future Dingle Peninsula Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) awareness across the community and information events and a proposed weekly Energy Clinic. The course is directed at those who are interested in becoming more familiar with the subject areas of renewable energy and sustainability.

It should be of particular interest to the following groups:

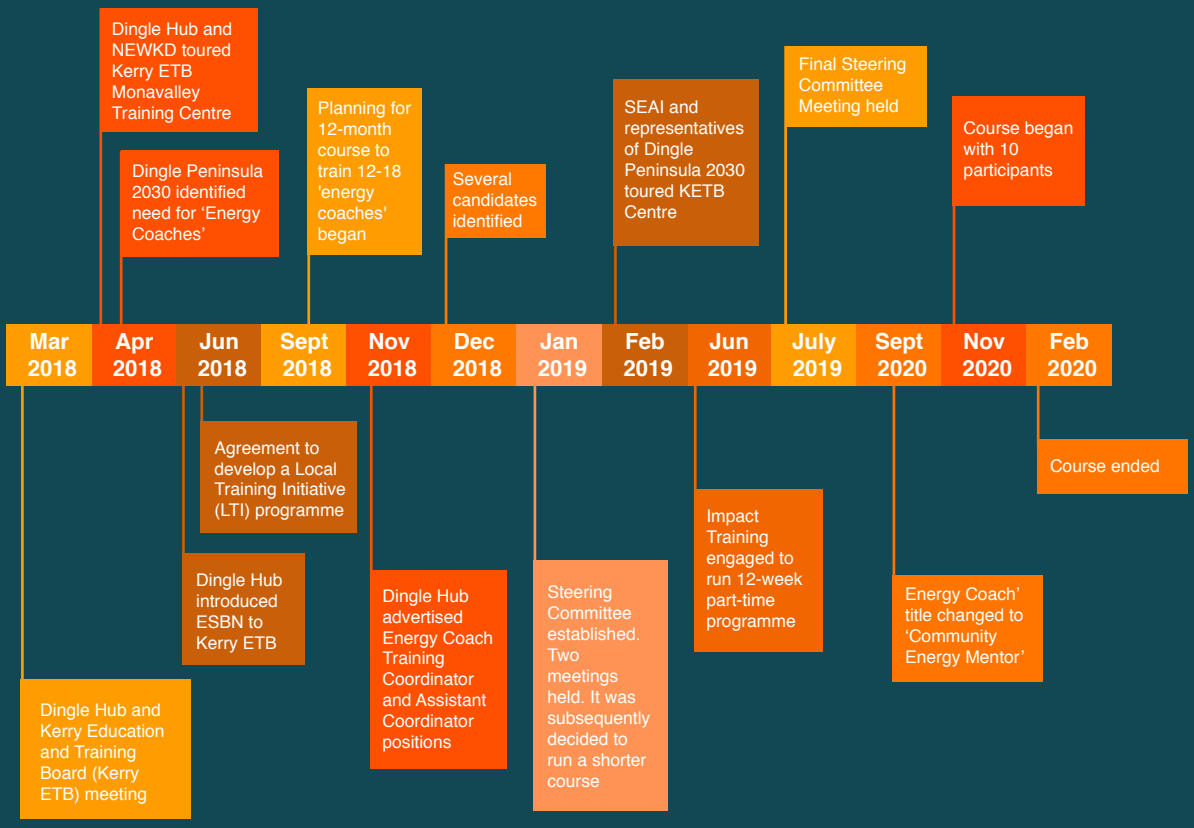
- Voluntary sector individuals who wish to upskill and support community transition to a low carbon society.
- Individuals who have an interest in pursuing careers in the area of energy sustainability and will progress to further education on completion of this course.

This course is provided by Kerry College – Monavalley Campus, in association with Dingle Sustainable Energy Community (SEC).

Visit: http://kerryetbtrainingcentre.ie/course/energymentor

Contact info@kerrycollege.ie or call 066 7149696 to apply.

Timeline



After over a year of planning and development, the Community Energy Mentor Course began on 13 November 2019 and ran on Wednesdays and Thursdays over a period of 12 weeks. It was based in the Údarás na Gaeltachta premises at Páirc Ghnó, An Daingin, on the outskirts of Dingle town, and involved in-person classroom sessions interspersed with site visits. The course was provided free of charge. There were 10 participants, four females and six males, from a variety of backgrounds, including farming and theatre management. They had varying levels of technical expertise and knowledge. The common chord was an interest in learning more about sustainability, renewable energy and retrofitting, and then sharing this within the local community. The syllabus of the course was deliberately designed to be flexible at the outset to allow for participant input into how the course proceeded.

The course (see Appendix 1 for schedule) was launched with an introductory talk by a representative of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), who also provided a range of experts to deliver material on community energy planning, sustainable energy practice and measures, sustainable communities, sustainable finance, sustainable energy systems, sustainable transport and hydro systems. Other sessions from various presenters focused on climate change, the light-emitting diode (LED) bulb swap event, Dingle Peninsula energy usage, building a successful Sustainable Energy Community (SEC), community engagement, smart energy, and the ESB Networks Dingle Project. A number of site visits were interspersed between classes to show the retrofitting and renewable energy installations in ESB Networks Ambassador buildings, and elsewhere including heat pump and geothermal systems, external insulation, a hydro installation, a BER assessment, an anaerobic digester and a community owned windfarm. The participants also completed an accredited two-day First Aid Responder Certificate Course.

The course ended on 13 February 2020 and the mentors participated in the official launch of Dingle Peninsula 2030, just a few weeks before the Covid 19 pandemic hit Ireland.

Funding

In total, this project cost the equivalent of **€39,300** (excluding the SEAI contribution – see below).

This included:

- The Dingle Hub role in initiating, scoping and coordinating the overall project during the 18+ months: **€8,000.**
- The overall costs incurred by Kerry ETB for the running and marketing of the part-time 12-week course: **€16,000.**

And the following 'in-kind' costs which were generously donated 'pro bono':

- Provision of a room for the course by Údarás na Gaeltachta: **€2,000**
- Attendance at 3 meetings of the 9 Steering Committee members: **€9,000**
- Recruitment of the initial course coordinators: **€1,500**
- The time and expertise of 7 non-SEAI presenters: **€2,800**

SEAI support was critical to the success of the course and their services and presenters were also generously provided free of charge. As these services were based on many inputs, accumulated over a number of years and involving experts from SEAI and outside bodies, they would be difficult to quantify. Therefore, the costs incurred have not been included in the above analysis.

Benefits of the Course

One of the great benefits of the course was the creation of a network of competent, like-minded people who were committed to supporting (both individually and collectively) the energy transition in their own local community and also in continuing to learn more about the topics.

In general, participants thoroughly enjoyed the course, and appreciated the extensive investment in their up-skilling. They felt very well served and supported by Impact Training, the Dingle Hub and Kerry ETB. In particular, they welcomed the opportunity to input their ideas into the schedule as the course progressed. They also welcomed the chance to get to know each other, to work together, to learn from skilled experts and to experiment with technical calculations. The participants found the field trips to be particularly useful – where they saw working examples of the various technologies (e.g. wind, hydro, anaerobic digestion, external insulation, air to water and ground source heat-pumps), and learnt from the personal experiences of those involved. They felt the course was well run and the speakers were excellent. Contacts made during the course were also very useful.

The First Aid Responder's course was commended as a very beneficial addition, especially for the farming community.

Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic began very soon after the course ended. The subsequent lock-downs and uncertainty made it very difficult to hold meetings, particularly public meetings, which would have greatly assisted with the dissemination of ideas across the local community. Once these restrictions have been lifted in the future, it is hoped that more active involvement will commence. One idea is to organise an energy event on the Peninsula to showcase the different energy technologies and the changes people can make in their own homes, farms and businesses.

Nevertheless, despite the circumstances, as one participant stated, it is important to 'Learn, Plan and Do'. During 2020, the Community Energy Mentors carried out research on the viability of the Dingle-Tralee commuter bus service, which led to Bus Eireann introducing a new, higher-frequency, bus schedule for that route as part of the wider Dingle Peninsula Sustainable Transport pilot project. In June 2020, some of the mentors participated in 'Re-Imagine Dingle', an on-line workshop using digital tools to facilitate community-driven innovation, co-creation, and radical imagination. And significantly, two new groups have been set up by course participants, namely:

1) The West Kerry Dairy Farmers Sustainable Energy Community (SEC), which aims is to create a vibrant community of sustainable, energy efficient dairy farmers, build resilience, exploit renewable energy sources, reduce costs and carbon emissions, and develop a template for other rural farming communities across the country.

2) The Corca Dhuibhne Community Energy Group, which aims to develop community-owned projects supporting the sustainable transition and to help create and maintain well-paid, year-round jobs on the Peninsula. The work will focus on community-owned electricity projects, retrofitting and the provision of an information service for domestic energy users.

The commitment by Kerry ETB was very impressive and that commitment has continued through the publication of the Kerry ETB Service Plan 2021, which incorporates the launch of a Kerry ETB Sustainability Strategy. Kerry ETB also envisages the provision of suitable training for those wishing to work in the area of sustainability. In this regard, Kerry ETB is proposing to construct a new facility for training apprentices, technicians and others interested in new 'green' and 'smart' technologies. They hope to build a model training-house that will enable teaching of these skills on site. They have also continued to commence the delivery of innovative courses in areas such as Wind Turbine Technical Apprenticeship, marine technician, ecological studies, green hospitality, energy renewables and smart technology courses. These will complement the current range of courses on Wind Turbine Maintenance, Overhead Lines, etc.

Lessons Learnt

Based on the experience of working with Kerry ETB, it is clear that the Education and Training Boards have a huge resource of committed professional educators and trainers, operating in a well-respected organisation that is deeply embedded in the local community and has the capability, capacity and willingness to organise accredited courses and training that could assist with the transition to low carbon and help address the challenges posed climate change. While the Climate Action Plan (2019) and the Programme for Government (2020) commit the Government to addressing climate action, each Government Department and public body is expected to make its contribution by seeing what it can do to support the overall commitment. By being willing to explore at local level what can be achieved and how it can address some of the issues, Kerry ETB has been to the forefront nationally in seeking to address the training requirements so that local communities and learners will be ready for, and benefit from, the low carbon society of the future.

The initial idea suggested by Dingle Hub to Kerry ETB was very ambitious. It was clear to the Hub that there would be significant opportunities for local job creation and the establishment of new businesses linked to the low carbon transition. It would also be necessary to build capacity and capability within the local community to help it to transition to a low carbon community. Therefore, there was a need to explore the kind of training that would be required, how best Kerry ETB could assist in providing this, what format would be most suitable and what course content and form of accreditation would be possible. Being the first of its type, a series of discussions took place until a suitable solution was agreed. This took a number of iterations, as it did not neatly fall into any traditional category with which the Kerry ETB was familiar. The support and flexibility displayed by Kerry ETB was superb and the course would not have happened without that support. This included not only agreeing a specific course format but also the detailed content for each module, the form of evaluation and the logistics, all of which had to be agreed in advance, and then making the required changes as it became clear that potential participants had a preference for a part-time 12-week programme, as opposed to a year-long course.

Other agencies were also very helpful. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) was hugely accommodating, both in agreeing what should be provided and in supplying suitable course materials and instructors to help deliver the training. ESB Networks was also supportive in discussing the requirements that it saw would be important for the future energy transition and by participating in the Steering Committee and offering to assist where it could.

Even for those most interested in transitioning to low carbon, the need to navigate a complex pathway across installers and product technicians (from ventilation to heat pumps to hot water, etc.), energy consultants and auditors, and builders is highly challenging. An original objective of the Community Energy Mentor course was to address the gap where homeowners perceive a lack of independent, impartial advice. There is a wealth of knowledge on the SEAI website but people do not have the understanding or time to find the information relevant to them. What we have learned is that a 12 week, part-time course cannot provide the level of training necessary and there is still a need for an integrated energy clinic service with qualified experts, alongside local Community Energy Mentors.

From the outset, there was a lack of clarity around what the course would equip the participants to do. When soundings were taken in the local community it became obvious that potential participants wanted a relatively short part-time course. Therefore, this removed the possibility of accreditation under the National Framework of Qualifications. Some participants hoped that it would help them to find paid employment in the area of sustainability and energy transition, which has not materialised, whereas others were more interested in just improving their own knowledge on the topics, with a view to assisting the local community. There was also some confusion around what they were expected to do as Community Energy Mentors and the time that would be required for their voluntary input. Therefore, participants struggled initially to identify a role for themselves. While there was a general and very positive aspiration that the mentors would deliver active energy engagement in and with the

community, in practice this felt very vague and this sense of ‘vagueness’ continued after the course concluded. It was not clear whether the mentors were being left free to make what they would of that aspiration, so some may have felt a little ‘at sea’.

It was also initially not clear where the mentors fitted into the existing Dingle Peninsula Sustainable Energy Community (SEC), and whether or not they could or should develop their own active groups (e.g. community energy) inside or outside this structure.

The participants left the course feeling they were not subject matter experts, and that they lacked both the expertise and confidence to fully advise members of the community on their energy options and choices. They felt they did not have all the answers, as there are so many scenarios and options. Many of the questions that members of the public have are technically specific.

The lack of a clear path ahead was obviously not helped by the Covid pandemic which emerged soon after the course ended and which had such a subsequent impact both on the participants’ lives and on the local community. The resulting lockdowns meant that it was not possible for the Community Energy Mentors to hold proposed drop-in advice ‘Energy Clinics’ in the Dingle Hub or to participate in, or organise, other public events. However, during 2020, the mentors recognized that there was a range of opportunities in which to get involved, they just needed the initial support to go down their own routes, or to work as a team on relevant projects.

Recommendations

- A clearer outcome for the course needs to be defined at the outset, so that the expectations from the organisers matches those of the participants. Linked to this is the type of course envisaged - the time commitment, the standard of the course and whether it is accredited under the National Qualifications Framework (NFQ), or not. An NFQ accreditation would not be possible from a two-day per week, 12-week course so, therefore, the level of commitment and standard required of participants have important implications for the outcome. This type of course provides a general introduction and there should be no expectation that it will lead to a 'qualification' (such as BER certifier). For these qualifications, the course/s need to be NFQ-approved and will demand from participants both a significant time commitment and a minimum technical standard.

- Rather than prescribing the role of the trained Community Energy Mentor and a follow-up action plan in advance, participants should be encouraged to look at this as part of their project work during the course itself.

- Classroom time would benefit from a clear schedule in which sessions were broken down into smaller chunks of no more than 40 minutes each, incorporating both presentations and small group discussion, with breaks and movement in between.

- The field trips and on-site visits are very important for participants so that they can get a greater understanding of the technologies and how they work in real life situations, alongside people's experiences of using them.

- Expecting Community Energy Mentors to provide members of the local community with advice on renewable energy technology and retrofitting was daunting and felt like a very responsible role. This area is very technical and therefore direct advice should only come from fully-trained, accredited skilled people. However, some training could be provided to Community Energy Mentors on managing a large scale retrofitting programme and the development of funding and business case models for community-owned energy.

- Hopefully in 2021, Kerry ETB will construct a 'model house' to demonstrate the various renewable energy technologies. This could be of real interest to future participants and, indeed, former participants.

- Similarly, it would be useful for course participants to be able to log into a website with connections to a working demonstration house or sample homes, giving up-to-date real-time information data on energy being generated (solar panels, heat pumps, wind turbine or mini hydro) and showing the savings being made. Having ongoing verifiable figures on hourly, daily, monthly and yearly basis to study would be a great asset and would help mentors to feel more confident in recommending a system that works. This may be something that could be provided by SEAI.

- With the new obligations coming on local authorities under the Climate Change and Low Carbon Development Bill 2021, there is likely to be interest from local authorities in increasing the knowledge within local communities in relation to the low carbon sustainable transition. The course (suitably updated) could be run again and made available across County Kerry (and beyond, if desired). There may even be a possibility of running an online version, complimented by some site visits.

- Similarly, this course might be of interest to SEAI, as a precursor to setting up an SEC, as it would provide the basic roadmap and knowledge and would develop a sense of ownership of the process. The data from the local Energy Master Plan could be included in the course content.

Recommendations

- There is potential to build upon the collaboration with Kerry ETB and to discuss potential opportunities in the following areas:
    - General introductory training for farmers to address renewable energy issues and the use of technologies and data (e.g Internet of Things, Sensors, Data and Information and Communications Technologies) to support a transition to low emission farming;
    - General introductory training for owners/managers/staff in the tourism and hospitality sector;
    - A course for second level teachers who may be interested in addressing the climate change issues through the use of renewable energy and associated technologies (e.g. the use of Internet of Things, Sensors, Data and Information and Communications Tech nologies) to support a transition to low carbon society; and the use of Virtual Climate Hacks for use in schools;
    - Assisting house owners, house holders and others to consider how best to address the transition to low carbon, in respect of their own house, was one of the challenges that the Community Energy Mentors thought they might be able to address. From a policy perspective, there may be benefits in adopting the model that is utilised by the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), which is a free service provided to the public and funded through the Citizens' Information Board. Seeing as energy is a significant ongoing cost for householders and the costs associated with transition to low carbon will be signifi cant, there may be benefits in utilising a model similar to MABS. There may be a role for Community Energy Mentors, with additional training (if required) to provide this support through such a service.

Appendix 1: Community Energy Mentor Course Schedule

13 November 2019
Registration: Kerry College, Monavalley Campus
Introductions
Siobhán Dempsey, Course Facilitator
Mark Sexton, Impact Training, Course Manager
Deirdre de Bhailís, Dingle Hub

14 November 2019
Speaker
Gearóid Fitzgibbon, TEA
Community Energy Planning

21 November 2019
Speakers
Laurence O Reilly, ORS
Energy Sustainable Practice & Measures, domestically & Commercially

Deirdre de Bhailís, Dingle Hub
Who we are and what we do

Site Visit
ESBN Dingle Project Ambassador, Dinny Galvin Farm & Home

27 November 2019
Speaker
Dr Vincent Carragher, TCD Sustainable Communities & Sustainable Finance

28 November 2019
Morning session
Idea Generation - Building a local sustainable energy community
Afternoon session
Site Visit - ESBN Dingle Project Ambassador, Spillane's Pub, Maharees

04 December 2019
Speaker
Laurence O Reilly, ORS
Sustainable Energy - an overview of systems in use in Ireland

05 December 2019
Morning Session
Group presentations on *idea generation - Building a local sustainable community*

Afternoon session
Site visit - ESBN Dingle Project participant Noel Malone, Ballyferriter

11 December 2019
Video link with conference in Athenry @ Dingle Hub
Lessons learned from Denmark & Germany

12 December 2019
Site Visit
Lios Póil Heat Pump & Geothermal system
Annascaul External Insulation

18 December 2019
Morning session
Deirdre de Bhailís, Dingle Hub
LED Bulb Swap Event

Afternoon session
Connor McGookin, MaREI/UCC
Research details on Dingle Peninsula Energy usage

19 December 2019
Speaker
Laurence O Reilly, ORS
Sustainable Transport Hydro Systems

08 January 2020
Speaker
Prof Enda Mc Govern SHU
Climate Change

09 January 2020
Site Visit & Speaker
Kilgarvan Hydro Installation
Gerry Cunnan, Wind Water, Solar

14-16 January 2020
First Aid Responder Certificate Course

22 January 2020
Site Visit
Dún Chaoin
Blaithín & Rory McKeown, house, ESBN Ambassadors

29 January 2020
Speaker
Sylvia Thompson Kerry SEC
Building a successful SEC

30 January 2020
Speaker
Therese Murphy
Smart Energy - The Dingle ESBN Project
John Fitzgerald

05 February 2020
Site Visit
Tipperary Energy Agency, Shaun Finn, BER Assessment, Lios Póil, Galvin house

06 February 2020
Site Visits
Newcastle West, AD Plant, speaker Senan Meade

Tipperary, Power's farm, Community Energy Pioneer, speaker Aidan Power

Templederry, Tipperary Energy Agency, speaker Derry O'Donnell

Templederry Community Windfarm, speakers John & Sarah Fogarty

12 February 2020
Planning & Preparing for Energy Event

13 February 2020
Speakers
Hughie Kelliher, Kingspan
Insulation
Clare Watson, MaREI/UCC
Community Engagement

George Emerson, Kerry College, Monavalley Campus.

ENERGY EVENT, *Launch of Dingle Peninsula 2030*

Appendix 2: The Development Of The Course

In March 2018, a meeting was held between representatives of the Dingle Hub and Kerry Education and Training Board (Kerry ETB) to discuss the various initiatives to transition the Dingle Peninsula to a low carbon community and to explore how Kerry ETB might become a partner and help the Dingle Peninsula and, ultimately, County Kerry, to transition to a low carbon society.

At the time, Kerry ETB provided training in wind turbine maintenance, fibre installation and in overhead electricity lines, and they were planning to develop courses for electric vehicle maintenance. They were very interested in exploring what types of courses would be helpful to prepare local communities and learners to participate fully in the low carbon transition and the associated job opportunities and new businesses that may become available. It was proposed that, in discussion with ESB Networks, courses could be identified for the upskilling of plumbers, electricians, technicians, installers of heat pumps, and others. A role for Kerry ETB could also possibly emerge in the Dingle Hub/Net Feasa water monitoring sensor project, using sensors over a LORA network, and in relation to sustainable tourism on the Peninsula.

The following month, members of the Dingle Hub and North East and West Kerry Development (NEWKD) were given a tour of the Kerry College of Further Education and Training (Monavalley campus) in Tralee. In June 2018, the Dingle Hub brought representatives of ESB Networks to the Centre to discuss how to create a training and re-skilling program in Kerry for the delivery of infrastructure and services required for the ESB Networks Dingle Project and the wider Dingle Peninsula 2030 initiative. It was suggested that the Local Training Initiative (LTI) might be a suitable mechanism through which to work.

Arising from these discussions, Kerry ETB, in collaboration with the Dingle Peninsula 2030 and ESB Networks Dingle Project initiatives, committed to exploring and developing the following: [2]

- A range of upskilling courses for qualified crafts people in the area of renewable / smart technologies;
- A Demonstration House with suitable equipment to be used for training, with a public 'Open Day' to be organised for the house on completion;
- A programme to train local people as ESB Networks Ambassadors to encourage local engagement and uptake of renewable options in local homes and businesses;
- A Mobile Demonstration Unit to engage with the community and to explain what the low carbon transition will look like and the changes it will involve;
- Training for the installation and maintenance of electric vehicle (EV) charging points, and for mechanics who may be required to service and maintain EVs;
- The development of a Professional (Digital) Passport for suitably qualified persons (with existing trades) outlining their suitability to undertake these new activities/installs;
- Training for the installation and ongoing maintenance of smart widgets (for water and soil monitoring initially – but likely to go far beyond these two areas) in addition to maintenance and installs of Anaerobic Digesters.

ESB Networks had initially expressed an interest in supporting the development of the Demonstration House and Mobile Demonstration Unit, but were unable to do so within their Dingle Project budget.

[2] Outlined in the Kerry ETB Service Plan 2019 https://www.kerryetb.ie/sdm_downloads/kerry-etb-service-plan-2019/

Appendix 2: The Development Of The Course

A clear need for the training of local 'energy coaches', to support people in the process of transitioning to a low carbon society, was identified and discussed at a Dingle Peninsula 2030 stakeholder meeting. This became the first collaborative project with Kerry ETB. At the time, the Dingle Hub was the central point for enquiries from people wanting to know more about how to retrofit their homes and introduce new renewable technologies. The staff in ESB Networks were also receiving many queries on the back of launching their solar PV trials and Ambassador Programme in the area. It was hoped that these people would become an initial customer base for the trained energy coaches, with the Hub facilitating the connection. It was also anticipated that participants would support the Course Coordinator to coach the five Ambassadors that were to become part of the ESB Networks Dingle Project.

The Local Training Initiative (LTI) was identified as the most suitable route through which to deliver the course. It is primarily for people who are experiencing barriers accessing the labour market, mainstream training or education programmes, and priority is given to persons who have been on the Live Register for longer periods of time. The LTI provides a Level 6 QQI award which can lead to further qualifications if desired, and it provides for a Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator to deliver and coordinate training. It was hoped that a suitable course and award could be developed combining community development and sustainable energy, which would then serve as a national model.

The overall aim of the project was to provide a training course which would equip participants to help, enable and support people to adapt their current energy lifestyles in a factual, non-judgmental manner. The objectives included: introducing participants to the concepts of energy sustainability, the goals of energy technology assessment, and the promotion of sustainable energy technologies at community level; equipping participants with skills to benefit from the employment opportunities that will inevitably come from the transition to a low carbon society, and providing a development path for them to move to higher skilled, sustainable employment; helping to connect the trained mentors with the local community, through a drop-in facility in the Dingle Hub; and building greater competence and capability across the community so that the transition to low carbon can be enabled and jobs/business opportunities can be identified and supported on the Dingle Peninsula and across County Kerry.

In June 2018, it was agreed that an LTI application would be made and that potential suitable candidates for the course would be identified in the local community. It was initially hoped that a Course Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator could be recruited in September/October 2018, in order to help design the programme and to have it up and running in January 2019. It was noted that the main parts of any LTI course would take place in Dingle but the Kerry ETB Training Centre in Monavalley, Tralee would also be available.

Simultaneously, discussions began with SEAI to elicit their involvement and collaboration in the training initiative, which included a visit by their Head of Emerging Sectors to the Kerry ETB Training Centre in Tralee in February 2019.

By September 2018, plans were afoot to develop a 12-month course, as a pilot project, to train approximately 12-18 (ideally 15) people as 'energy coaches'. Participants would obtain an L6 award that could lead to further education and qualifications, if desired. The course would develop competence in the area of renewable energy technologies (air source heat pumps, solar PVs, smart circuit breakers, batteries, etc.) and sales and communications skills. An in-depth knowledge of SEAI grant processes would also be provided. It was felt that these combined skills would position the trainees to avail of employment opportunities that are likely to arise from the transition to a low carbon society. It was also hoped that, if this pilot worked, it could be rolled out nationally, using the accreditation system and sharing of curricula that all Education and Training Boards utilise.

Appendix 2: The Development Of The Course

A Steering Committee was established with the following members: Sandy McSwiney (Kerry County Council), Anne-Marie Fuller (Kerry Sustainable Energy Co-op), Deirdre de Bhailís and Brendan Tuohy (Dingle Hub), Clare Watson (MaREI), Claire McElligott (ESB Networks), Enda Gallagher (Sacred Heart University), Seamus Hoyne (Limerick Institute of Technology), Xavier Dubuisson (SEAI SEC Mentor), and Ian Kilgallon (Gas Networks Ireland).

The first meeting of the Steering Committee was held in early January 2019, in the Kerry College of Further Education (Monavalley campus) in Tralee, with a representative of Kerry ETB. Discussion centred on the development of the course curriculum and content, course recruitment, resources required, and the appropriate mechanism to acquire SEAI approval. A second Steering Committee meeting was held in the Dingle Hub two weeks later to review draft documents on the two proposed course modules. But there were still questions around whether the course should be full-time or part-time. In order to engage the Coordinators on a full-time basis, there was a possibility that two part-time courses could be run.

SEAI assigned their SEC manager to work on this initiative, and it was thought that there may be scope for developing the trainees as mentors that SEAI could engage in the future, similar to the mentor roles for the SECs, or as technically proficient community engagers on behalf of community energy groups.

Approval was granted by Údarás na Gaeltachta for course attendees to qualify under a number of employment schemes, the most suitable being the rural social scheme (RSS).

Kerry ETB had advised that the earliest start date would be the end of April 2019. But, while feedback from local community groups indicated a clear interest in the course, there was virtually no support for commencing in Dingle in the April/May timeframe (as that is a very busy time for tourism on the Dingle Peninsula), so it was proposed to start in September. Both potential Coordinators were happy to plan around this.

However, over the next few months, it became apparent that the LTI vehicle, leading to a Level 6 QQI award, may not be the most appropriate way of delivering this course. Moreover, the proposed syllabus was too long in duration to simply provide an L5 certificate and the full-time nature was not appealing to prospective trainees. Instead, Kerry ETB offered to fund a shorter, part-time course, run by external consultants (who were on their list of approved contractors), to meet requirements.

It was therefore proposed to run a 12-week part-time programme to provide training for domestic energy coaches. The course would be based on a validated L5 QQI module, which gives flexibility to include any complimentary skills required. Kerry ETB engaged Impact Training to provide this course and to oversee all of the logistics and the delivery of the training.

In July 2019, the Steering Committee met with Impact Training to review and confirm the Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes for Module 1 – Energy Sustainability in the Community. Trying to match the prospective participants' desire for a part-time course (such as, two days per week over twelve weeks) and the need for some form of accreditation for the course that would enable it to be supported by Kerry ETB, was challenging as most accredited courses were fulltime and/or part-time but spread over a number of years. It was finally proposed by Kerry ETB that, in order to be able to provide some form of certification, an existing accredited course, such as First Aid Response, could usefully be incorporated into Module 1. This would enable the delivery of the required skills through a part-time course that would be attractive to people interested in this pilot project. There would then be potential, in the future, to offer an advanced level Module 2 to course participants who may wish to gain a relevant qualification beyond the initial pilot.

Appendix 2: The Development Of The Course

In early September 2019, Impact Training raised a concern about the use of the word 'Coach' in the title, as the word implied a level of certification which did not apply as the new course would only be delivering the preparatory Module 1. The Steering Committee agreed the following title – 'Community Energy Mentor Course'.

The course was advertised widely by both Kerry ETB and the Dingle Hub on local and social media, and interviews were held with prospective trainees in early November. The course began on 13 November 2019 and ended on 13 February 2020.

The Dingle Peninsula 2030 co-ordinating team would like to acknowledge and thank all the people who have so generously given their time and support, both on the Dingle Peninsula and further afield and in particular the community energy mentors who participated in the course and inputted into this learning brief.

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