



Eco-friendly Macroom to receive prestigious energy award

Eco-friendly Macroom is to become the first town in Ireland to receive an award for energy excellence

By ANNE RYAN

MACROOM expects to be certified by Europe as the first town in Ireland to be declared competent to receive a prestigious energy award in the next two weeks.

The mid-Cork town was the first in Ireland to have street lighting is continuing to show initiative in terms of eco-friendly solutions of its energy use.

The Town Clerk this week revealed that the Corkman he hopes in the near future to investigate the possibility of pioneering the environmentally-friendly policy of running its small fleet of transport on bio-diesel.

Mr Kevin Curran entered Macroom as one of the first towns in Ireland to participate in the pilot scheme for the energy awards but he himself is now beginning to be an avid proponent of the ideal.

He says that small steps in offices and households will have the dual effect of both saving on their financial budgets and leaving the world a better place for those who follow in our footsteps.

Mr Curran revealed the Town Council has begun a campaign of switching to energy saving lights when the old ones run out, of buying a new energy-efficient boiler when the old ones shut down and of recycling office laser printers which can be returned postage-free to the manufacturing company.

Mr Curran said that if every house turned down its heating by one degree; if people walked to the shop instead of driving.

Or if they also affixed individual thermostats to all radiators, than the office-unit or household would be guaranteed to save at least one per cent, which would amount to a significant budget-saving figure over a long term period.

The environmental award is given on a monitoring exercise of how efficiently individual towns who have applied under the scheme operate their energy-use strategy.

The scheme is co-ordinated under the SWS Group of Select Energy Solutions and provides certification under the EU funded initiative for towns and cities across Europe that have been making a significant contribution to improving energy efficiency and increasing use of renewable energy.

This week there were two towns in Ireland neck and neck for this award, Neenagh and Macroom, and both were at an advanced stage compared to other towns.

However, because the German auditor arrived at the Macroom office a day ahead of when she arrived in Neenagh, Macroom should be the first town in the country to receive the award for energy excellence.

Mr Curran said that this award would make a big difference to the town for a lot of reasons and it would be certainly easier to attract business in a town that could boast an official declaration for it being "clean and green" and committed to energy efficiency.

The go-ahead Town Clerk said that if people became more energy conscious in small ways it would help in big ways and would make an enormous personal saving as well as reducing harmful omissions.

Even in terms of driving - while the legal limit was low it made perfect environmental sense to drive at the correct speed as petrol operated in the most efficient way at this level.

The Town Office will now, in a daring new approach, look at the possibility of converting existing automated vehicles from petrol which was more expensive

and environmentally harmful, into the more environmentally-friendly bio-diesel, which is grown from rape-seed and produced in Ireland. The process of investigation will begin in the near future.

The HP laser printers come with a postage-paid returnable package to send the old printer back, which is then re-cycled and the town office was now implementing this policy.

Mr Curran said the office in its effort to use energy efficiently contacted the Cork County Council energy office, located at The Spa House, in Mallow. They requested some of the advisors to come to Macroom and advise them on how they could use existing resources in a more energy-saving way.

The advisors showed at how easy it is to waste resources, particularly through small things like dripping taps, or lights left on while not in use.

Macroom town has in general established an ethos for itself as a town committed to the environment, particularly in the opening of its Eco-business Park, at the western end of town, which uses lights that switch off automatically when not in use and implement several other futuristic energy-saving devices.

The Town Council was making just one more stand as part of this overall area-ethos.

Finally, the Town Clerk said that one of the measures that has so far impressed the energy auditors is the degree to which the Council went to make its existing stock of houses more energy efficient.

Insulation was installed to ensure that heat remained in the houses - and in one year through a heat-preservation policy the insulation would pay for itself, said Mr Curran.