



# Wicklow Sustainable Energy Community: Energy Awareness Day

 Wicklow, County Wicklow

Wicklow Sustainable Energy Community is a voluntary group which sets out to ensure that Wicklow responds to the climate emergency. The group has been shortlisted as a finalist in SEAI's Energy Awards 2022 in the Inspirational Energy Community category and hosted a free Energy Awareness Day in June 2022.

The Energy Awareness Day featured 18 electric vehicles from 10 dealerships sourced locally and nationally, alongside range of electric bikes and installers of solar panels, heat pump suppliers and electric car charger suppliers.



## Interview Questions and Responses

**How did you as a community agree the key objectives that you wanted your project to deliver?**

The Wicklow SEC, with a small core team of 6 people, identifies projects which are attainable and avoids large scale projects due to lack of expertise and resources.

The key objective of the Energy Awareness Day was to make people more aware of climate change and how to take action, accessing a large audience from within Wicklow town and the wider hinterland. Essentially, the Wicklow SEC wanted to access people with no experience or who wanted to make the next step in their climate action journey.

**How did you decide upon a single project idea that could deliver against those objectives?**

The Wicklow SEC had capacity for organising and managing an awareness day and identified that it within 6 months to a year, avoiding a project which was too large scale. The Wicklow SEC committee members collectively agreed that an Energy Awareness Day was the best way to access a large number of residents and businesses at relatively low cost.

**Describe the process by which you achieved consensus around objectives and projects. Has that consensus held or does it remain challenged by some in the community? If so, how are you dealing with that?**

Publicity was key to achieving the consensus of the community and exhibitors. The Wicklow SEC issued 8,100 flyers to the local community and businesses to raise awareness of the event and to attract visitors, families and children.

All 6 committee members of the Wicklow SEC were collectively behind the project and mutually agreed to pursue the project following open dialogue in project meetings.



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### How did you approach planning and project management around your selected idea?

The Wicklow SEC committee met every week for 6–8 weeks before the event to manage the project. The approach involved separating tasks to individual committee members to contact exhibitors, manage publicity and manage on-site logistics, directed by the Wicklow SEC Chairman.

The critical element in the planning process was working closely with the postal service to ensure the flyers reached 8100 addresses and to enable a successful event.

### How has that stood the test of time through the project? Have you had to revise your plans. How have you managed that process?

The small core project management team of 6 at the Wicklow SEC functioned very effectively, in partnership with undertaking planning well in advance of the event. The planning process began before the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019 and early 2020, with the event occurring in June 2022. However, the event was originally scheduled to take place in 2020.

### How did you identify a funding need?

The funding requirements were small for the event. An existing relationship with the Wicklow SEC with a local hardware shop, who sponsored the printing of the flyers free of charge and signage. The Wicklow SEC worked with Wicklow Tidy Towns who financed the distribution of the flyers, which was the largest expense.

Wicklow County Council financed an electric bike to raise awareness and provided smoothies to visitors. The local hall and facility were given by the local parish for free and didn't charge any exhibitors to host at the event.

These arrangements were driven by building strong relationships with local community stakeholders and highlight the importance of the event in supporting the local economy and wellbeing of the community.

### Did you have a need for specialist expertise for your project? If so how did you handle that and approach experts?

Designers of the flyers and signage were procured directly by the local hardware store which was the only specialist expertise required. The relationship between Wicklow SEC and the local hardware store was critical for enabling the printing and eventual distribution of the flyers.

### What have been the hardest difficulties to overcome and how did you overcome them?

The only difficulty was the lack of insulation companies not turning up on the day. However, extensive networking and reaching out directly to businesses ultimately enabled a successful event to occur.

As a result, local car dealerships in Wicklow and other clean energy exhibitors experienced a large increase in requests and orders following the event.

### Has the community managed to stay true to the original project vision? If not, why not? If it has, how has this been achieved?

The Wicklow SEC stayed true to its original vision by undertaking regular project planning meetings and ensuring the scope of the event was not too large to manage.

As a result, Wicklow County Council are interested in financing the event in 2023 and launching future energy roadshows across the wider County Wicklow using existing supplier connections.

### What have been the biggest learnings from the delivery of your project?

The key learnings reflect the most important requirements for hosting an event of this scale:

- A large space for the exhibition area and a separate area for entertaining families and young children.
- A car park with space for approximately 40 cars to host the EV exhibitors.
- Provision of food and drink by vendors.
- Communicate with an advertising agency and install local signage.
- A lead person to organise the event into a coherent time frame.
- Plan well in advance by meeting every week virtually or in person from 10 weeks in advance.
- Allocate specific roles to people within the community organisation or project management team.

### What decisions, or elements of organisation have been the most important in the delivery of your project?

Contacting a range of various businesses well in advance of the event was a critical decision, especially the car dealerships in Wicklow, Wexford and Dublin which sourced approximately 18 EVs for the event. The Wicklow SEC decided to directly phone businesses, emailed the flyer and asked them for confirmation and were in constant contact.

Initially, the Wicklow SEC organised a strong committee interested in taking climate action, energy saving and had strong local connections to potential suppliers for the event.

### What were the most important sources of advice and guidance for your community as you moved through the different phases of the project?

The Wicklow SEC reached out to a key local contact who operates a successful local fair in Wicklow. This was a critical source of advice and contact who directed the Wicklow SEC to a local food supplier and advised the team to establish a dedicated children's play area to keep adults at the event for longer periods and to gain more interest.

#### Key contact

**Sylvester Burke**, Wicklow Sustainable Energy Community:  
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#### Links

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/WicklowSustainablesEnergy/>

**Press Release:** <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wicklow/news/wicklow-tidy-towns-gears-up-for-saturdays-information-packed-energy-awareness-day-41753164.html>