



Sustainable Energy Communities Programme

Energy Community One Stop Shop First Hand Experience

Ruth Buggie

Programme Manager

Community Energy Strategy and Schools



SEAI works with Government, homeowners, businesses and communities to create a cleaner energy future.



Overview



What we provide in support of community energy projects



What were the main challenges encountered



What actions we took to overcome these



Suggestions and advice

Supports



Sustainable Energy Community



A community that works together to develop a sustainable energy system for the benefit of the community

- Aiming to be as energy efficient as possible;
- Use renewable energy where feasible;
- Consider smart energy solutions

It can be as small as a street or as large as a county or region

Communities of active energy citizens will lead the societal transformation to a low carbon future

Community Journey



learning curve

LEARN

SEC Network

Community Network – open, collaborative, sharing and learning network. Levels of activity vary.

PLAN

Energy Master Plans

100% funding to develop an energy master plan to baseline energy use in the community and to identify a register of energy opportunities

DO

Community Grants

Capital grant programme to support community retrofit. Community role can vary from participation to project leadership.

Community Journey



LEARN

Join the Sustainable Energy Community network



1

Apply to join

2

Meet your mentor

3

Access learning and peer support

PLAN

Quantify current energy use and Identify opportunities



4

Apply for Energy Master Plan grant

5

Assign Energy Master Plan technical expert

6

Community launch of Energy Master Plan

DO

Implement your plan and Take Action



7

Prepare your project

8

Access further grant support

Supporting Communities – what is happening



Sustainable Energy Communities

Network of 800 communities, supported with mentors, training and energy master planning grants

Better Energy Communities

Panel of project coordinators who can deliver large scale energy retrofit projects (circa €100M/year)

Renewable Energy Communities

Community category for large scale community led generation projects with trusted advisors and early stage grant support

Mandatory Community Benefit funds

Communities near new large scale wind and solar, onshore and offshore projects will have access to €1-2 Bn over the coming decades that could support climate action ambitions



ALMOST 800 COMMUNITIES

Part of SEAI's Sustainable Energy Communities Network



MORE THAN
40,000
CITIZENS ENGAGED

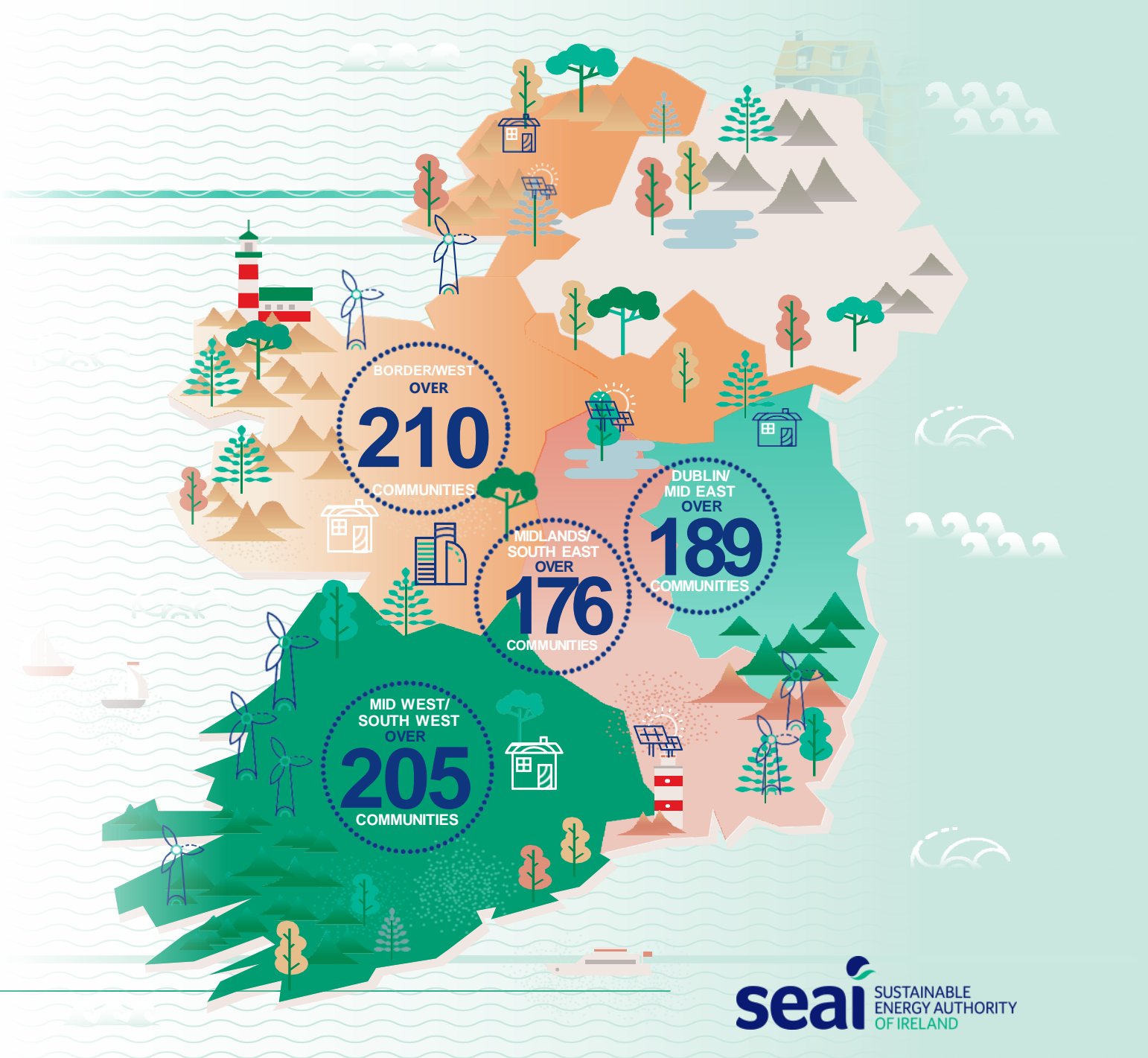
122 ENERGY
MASTERPLANS
COMPLETED



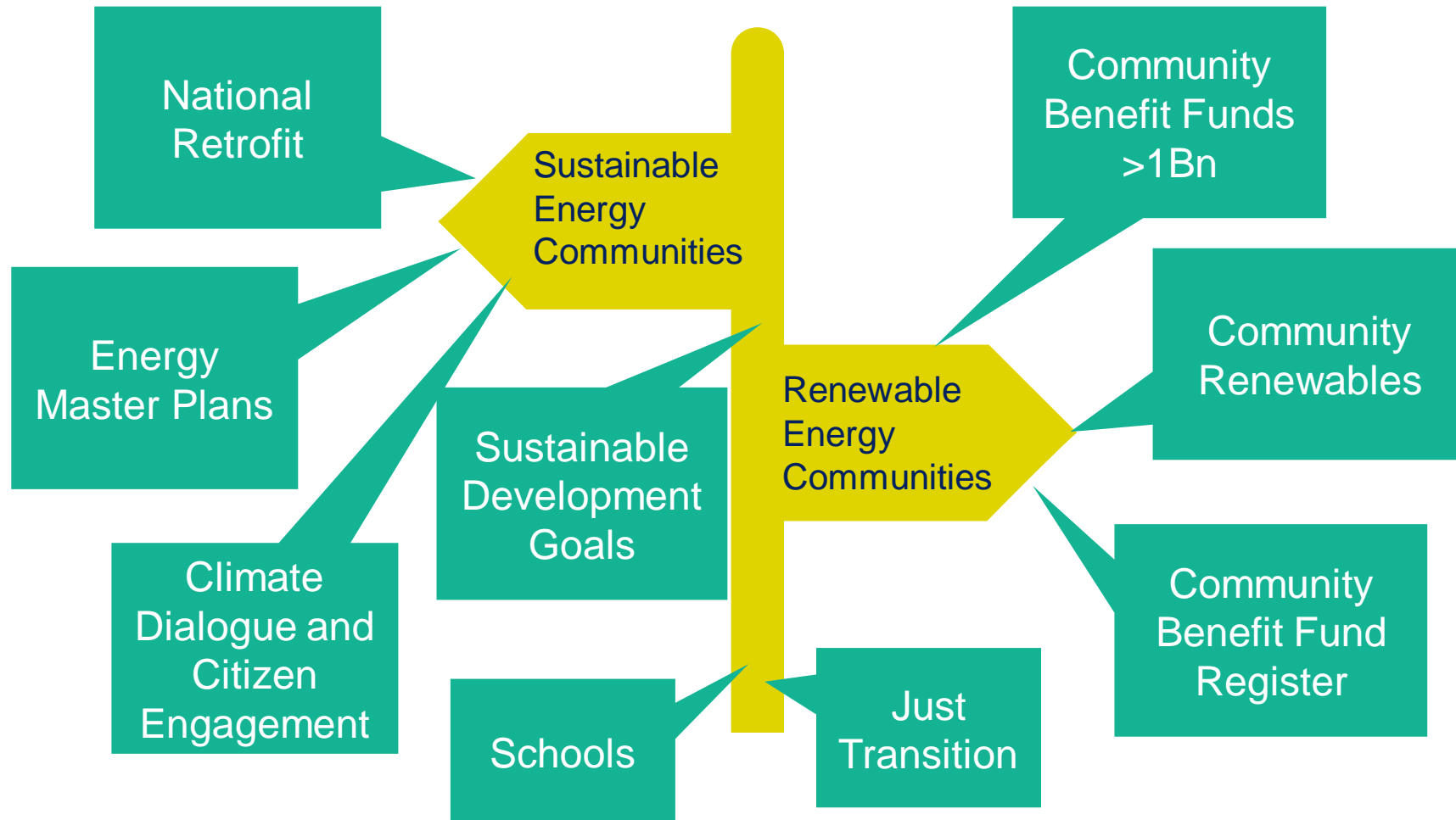
76
COMMUNITIES

Are currently working on their Energy Master Plans

↓ Find out more at www.seai.ie/sec



Supporting Communities – what is happening



Community RESS Supports



Trusted Advisors –

- grid
- finance
- technical
- planning
- legal

All include feasibility checks

Pre construction grants also available (up to 180k or 80% of costs)

Local Grid Studies

- County level
- Purpose
 - To identify capacity within existing heat maps
 - To support communities in areas with capacity to develop projects.

7 Guides published with 2 more due soon on:

- Stakeholder Engagement
- Business Planning & Procurement

Community Enabling Framework – SEAI role



Community Renewable Electricity
Team Appointed

Procure panel of **Trusted Advisors**
expert support – Technical, legal, financial,
project management etc.

**Community Enabling
Framework**

Financial supports
Enabling Grants to support project scoping &
development

Online Information Warehouse
“one stop shop” for community guidance and
resources

Toolkit - Technical



Community Energy Resource Toolkit
The Planning Process



Community Energy Resource Toolkit
Solar PV



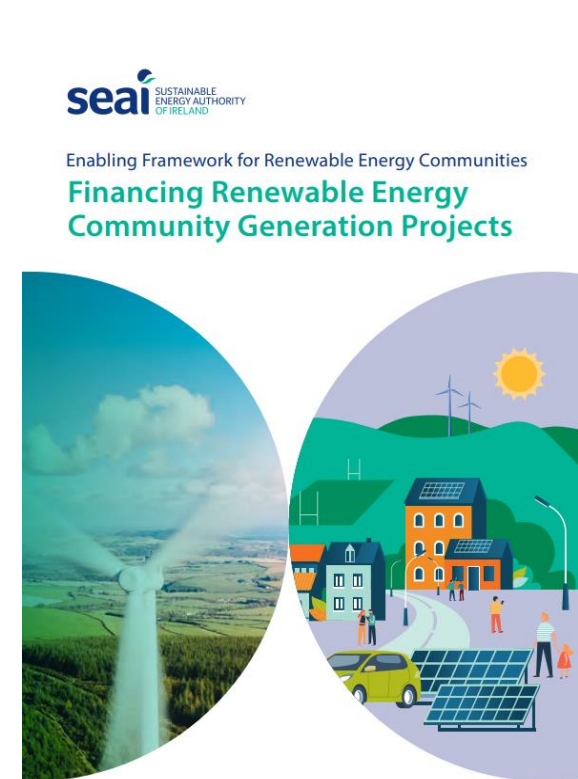
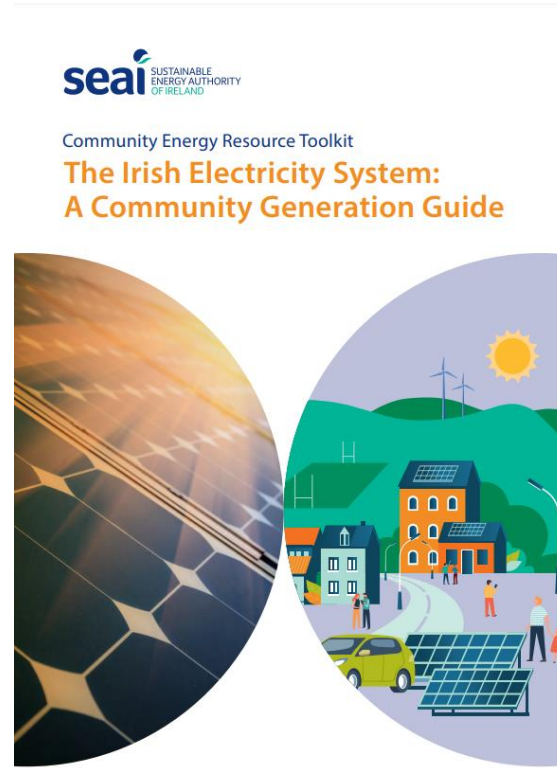
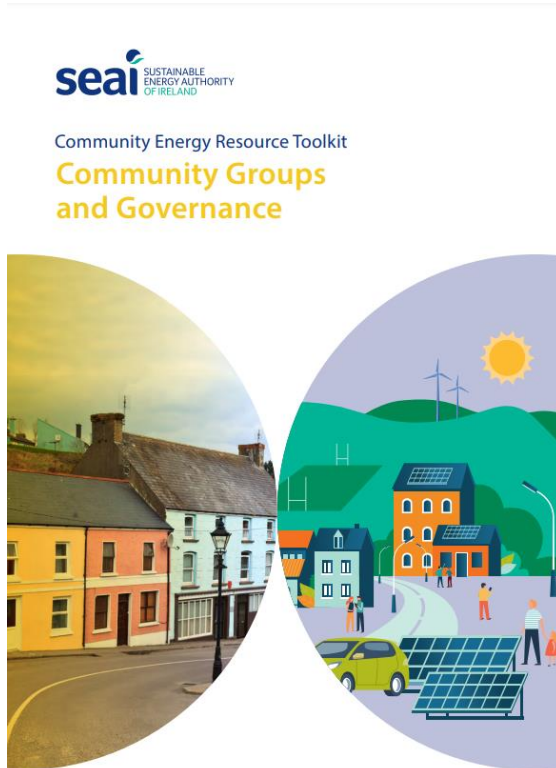
Community Energy Resource Toolkit
Onshore Wind



Community Energy Resource Toolkit
Grid Connection



Toolkit - Guides



Main Challenges and Actions



Challenges – at the start



What is an energy community?

- Definition
- Existing example
- Legal structures

How to engage?

- Use existing networks
- Take every opportunity to meet
- Work with the willing
- Identify Champions

How to convince

- Quick wins
- Demonstration projects
- Keep listening
- Finance

Challenges – building capacity



Programme design

- Keep it flexible
- Evolving objectives
- Mentor role didn't exist
- Market capacity
- Technical skills
- Administration burden

Programme Resources

- From 2 part time to 11
- Online tools
- Webinars
- Research projects
- Find similar roles in other organisations
(Community of Practice of Community Engagement Practitioners)

Influence

- EU policy
- National Policy
- Events such as this
- Solution focussed
- Competing demand (retrofit)

Challenges – now



Data

Balance of data requests

How to provide the right information

Tracking impacts

Scale

Volunteer Structure

Trusted Advisors

Improve Mentor capacity

Leverage local stakeholders

Need national forum

How to build local capacity

Need for recognition of role/cost

Balance of volunteer/professional

Lack of Strategy

Underway

Bringing all national and EU policy together

Align different support models

Redefine purpose and objectives and role of community in energy and citizen engagement

Challenges – Finance



- Community projects are inherently more risky
- Risk burden/how to share
- Early and high level feasibility studies
- Staged grant processes to manage risk on both sides
- EU funding options
- Alternative project structures
- Cost of project management
- How to cover costs of engagement and climate literacy
- 100% funding where possible
- State aid?
- Local reputation
- Value of volunteer time – especially for peer to peer learning
- Retrospective payments very difficult for communities
- Community financing
- Large scale financing not there



Suggestions



Suggestions



- Don't wait for policy 'to be right'
- Don't underestimate the ambition for change from communities
- Work with the willing
- Stay connected – keep listening + learning
- Work with existing structures where possible
- Find champions, in communities and in policy and local government
- Peer to peer learning works
- Find your own peer to peer network
- Work with as many research projects as you can
- Case studies of early wins



Thank you

Ruth.buggie@seai.ie

www.seai.ie/community-energy/

