

Activity Report 2024 to the Annual General Meeting of MREF

AGM report, 22 October 2024

INTRODUCTION

2024 was another active year of engagement and progress by the Micro-Renewable Energy Federation, building on the achievements of prior years in securing government supports and a more positive regulatory environment for the micro-generation sector. Micro-generation is now seen as a highly viable option for more and more households, businesses and farmers in their transition to a renewable energy future and in making a significant contribution to Ireland's climate action journey.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The political context has been largely dominated by international events, including continuing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, the US Presidential Election and the withdrawal of the Democratic Party Candidate, President Joe Biden with his place being taken by the US Vice President, Kamal Harris.

On the domestic front, 2024 has already seen Local and European Parliamentary Elections and heightened speculation about a General Election before the end of 2024. In parallel, political parties are seeing internal changes in leadership (Green Party and Fine Gael) and the prospect of a new crop of public representatives going forward as candidates for Dáil Éireann in the next General Election.

Operational challenges persist for MREF members around grid connections, technical specifications and the operation, and outlook, for government support schemes. Throughout 2024, MREF has continued to engage with government and industry agencies on behalf of our sector, including ESB Networks, RECI, the SEAI, the Dept. of Agriculture and Dept. of the Environment, Climate and Communications, and the Dept of Housing and Local Government to progress issues and solutions for MREF members.

MREF also engages in the public realm with media to advocate for climate action and the 'democratisation' of the shift to renewable sources of energy and the pivotal role that micro-generation is playing in this national endeavour.

SUBMISSIONS/MEETINGS

MREF has consulted with members and prepared the submissions and representations during 2024 on:

- Significant on-going engagement with officials of the Dept of the Environment, Climate and Communications, the Department of Housing and Local Government and the Dept of Agriculture on the regulatory environment and government supports for micro-generation.
- Ongoing engagement with the SEAI and RECI re. SAFE Electric, the 30 amp and shunt issues.
- Ongoing engagement with the Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine on solar supports for farmers under TAMS
- Budget Submission to the Minister for Finance, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and Minister for Env., Climate and Communications
- Participation in the Public Consultation from ESB Networks on Network Capacity Pathways including attendance on a ESB Networks Webinar.

THE VOICE OF THE MICRO-GENERATION SECTOR

MREF has again been the voice of the Micro-Generation sector throughout the year.

MREF has issued nine press releases which have received coverage on a range of issues impacting the micro-generation sector and the shift to renewable sources of energy for businesses, homes and farms. MREF statements to date during 2024 have included:

22 January 2024	Micro-Renewable Energy Federation welcomes ESB Networks Net Zero Strategy Plans
22 May 2024	MREF calls for lower grid application costs under Mini-Generation Scheme
22 May 2024	MREF Comment on launch of second phase of Small Scale Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (SRESS)
7 June 2024	MREF calls on government to prioritise incentives for distributed battery storage on homes, businesses and farms
17 June 2024	MREF calls for safe solar zones to be dropped in planning requirements for roof top solar PV
9 th July 2024	Budget 2025: MREF calls for sustained support for micro-generation in Pre-Budget Submission
6 August 2024	MREF calls for major overhaul of planned small-scale energy scheme
30 September 2024	Solar PV domestic grant incentives must be enhanced
1 October 2024	Budget allocation to upgrade electricity grid welcomed but must prioritise grid connections for micro-generation

CONCLUSION

With clear evidence of real climate change and further change imminent on the political front at home and at European and international levels, the operating and policy environment will continue to present both challenges and opportunities. MREF must remain ready to act on these in the interests of members and the micro-generation sector it represents.