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Climate Change Adaptation Will Present Risks To Irish Businesses

Rising temperatures, increased risks of floods, wetter winters, drier summers and more intense storms are some of the climate changes anticipated to impact on Irish businesses in coming years.

However changes in climate can also bring opportunities as well as risks to Irish businesses, according to a new report, 'Adaptation to Climate Change: Issues for Business', published by Forfás.

Martin Shanahan, Chief Executive of Forfás said: "Given that Ireland is expected to be relatively less affected by climate change than our key competitor countries, properly managed, Ireland can have competitive advantages through access to significant water resources and an ongoing temperate climate. This can present opportunities for indigenous companies to realise these competitive advantages and to promote Ireland as a relatively low risk location for business activity."

"The key now is to facilitate Irish businesses in planning ahead so that they can minimise risks, reduce costs and realise opportunities arising from climate change adaptation. Building awareness and capacity among businesses through supports from business representative bodies, enterprise development agencies and other stakeholders will be central to ensuring successful business adaptation in Ireland."

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, Batt O'Keeffe TD, said the report uncovered strong business opportunities for Irish firms which the Government's enterprise agencies should now target.

"Our adaptation to climate change presents domestic and international opportunities for Irish businesses across a range of sectors. For example, making new and existing buildings and infrastructure more climate-resilient presents opportunities for the construction sector while increases in global food demand due to global climate challenges can boost our agri-food sector."



"The challenge for the Government and our enterprise agencies is to help turn these new business opportunities into jobs as Ireland's economy emerges from recession and returns to growth."

The report highlights that without proper planning there could be significant costs associated with climate change to both businesses and the economy and points to the November 2009 floods, which resulted in infrastructure damage, property damage, poor water quality, power outages and the inability of workers to access work, as an example of the potential vulnerabilities. Insurance costs for the November floods totalled €244 million.

Adapting business infrastructure and the policy framework is also seen as critical to successful climate change adaptation in Ireland. The report makes a number of recommendations in the areas of water supply and quality, flood protection, energy, transport, communications and waste management to help critical infrastructure owners ensure that these pieces of infrastructure are climate resilient for businesses. Recommendations on a range of policy measures in areas which can help business reduce the risks and maximise the opportunities of climate change such as spatial policy, regulations, research and public procurement are also examined.

Firm 'Shines Light' On Energy Efficiency

A Belfast-based electrical distribution business, AJ Hurst, is on the expansion trail following the success of a green initiative that is helping customers power ahead on the energy-efficiency front.

The family-owned company, which specialises in the total solutions provision of electrical equipment, has moved into new premises at Unit 10, Graham Industrial Estate, Dargan Crescent in Belfast. The move, which represents a significant investment is designed to assist the company in driving further growth throughout the UK.

"While the industry is still going through a very challenging period due to the economic downturn we felt it was important to prepare ourselves for the post-recession period and the anticipated uplift in demand. As a progressive company looking for further growth in the marketplace the move will allow us to substantially increase our stockholding. This will enable us to enhance our already fast response times and will, we believe, result in more customers," explained Managing Director, Lisa Goldsbrough.

"In recent months our business has been boosted by the number of innovative energy efficient lighting schemes we have carried out for clients. We have been able to help these companies make substantial annual savings by implementing smarter solutions which have the added benefit of contributing to carbon emissions reduction."

"Whilst energy management and cost savings are key factors for the implementation of these schemes more and more businesses are aspiring to have improved green credentials. By putting systems in place that help companies to consume less energy we are also helping them to considerably reduce their carbon footprint."

The savings can run into thousands of pounds and in some cases can result in reducing energy bills by more than 50%.

Companies benefiting from AJ Hurst's expertise range from Corus Steel and



Portadown-based Irwin's Bakery to the Potter Group, professional logistics service providers in England, and Scottish-based GE Caledonian, which specialises in the repair and refurbishment of aero engines and related components.

AJ Hurst is planning to help more companies throw new light on their energy consumption in the year ahead and has set ambitious targets for external sales.

Tying in with the move the company has just been appointed a distributor for Lightstep Technologies Ltd, a Belfast-based company which specialises in intelligent evacuation technology.

Lightstep produce innovative products based around an LED light based system which is designed to help people escape from life threatening situations. The company has a core range of products that will light up corridors, exit routes and doorways in the event of an emergency.

"The Lightstep evacuation technology represents a world first and we are delighted to add these intelligent systems to our comprehensive product portfolio," said Lisa.

Musgrave And Airtricity Agree 'Green Electricity Deal'

Food retailer and distributor, the Musgrave Group, has announced it has signed an agreement with Airtricity to supply green electricity to its network of depots and sites across the island of Ireland.



Under the terms of the contract, Airtricity will supply green electricity to all Musgrave Group owned facilities on the island of Ireland, both North and South and via an affinity scheme to its SuperValu, Centra and Daybreak stores in the Republic of Ireland and SuperValu, Centra and Mace stores in Northern Ireland. The overall deal is worth in the region of €25 million and the agreement is the largest all-island green electricity deal of its kind.

Musgrave Group has made significant progress in improving the energy efficiency of its business and continues to focus on reducing its carbon emissions and associated costs. The new 'green' electricity contract with Airtricity extends Musgrave's current use of electricity generated

from renewables into Northern Ireland. The Airtricity deal will allow Musgrave displace more than 130,000 tonnes of CO₂, which is the equivalent of taking more than 60,000 family cars off Irish roads annually.

John Curran, Environmental Executive Musgrave Group, said: "Mitigating climate change impacts and reducing our dependence on fossil fuels are crucial sustainability issues."

"As well as lowering emissions of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases, this agreement with Airtricity will also result in reduced energy costs for Musgrave and our retail partners and underscores the value of continuing to focus on driving our sustainability strategy even in times of recession."

iPhone App to Assist Building Firms

SmartBuilder Software Ltd has launched 'Site Clean Up', a novel iPhone application to assist building firms of all sizes to clean-up their construction sites more efficiently and cost effectively.

SmartBuilder Software, a new Irish start-up, was established earlier this year to develop mobile software applications for use on construction sites in Ireland and internationally.

SmartBuilder Software, headquartered in NovaUCD, the Innovation and Technology Transfer Centre at University College Dublin, developed the Site Clean Up app after market research showed a demand for a practical technology solution to this problem. SmartBuilder has designed its new app to be used by building firms of all sizes, from those building a school extension in a small town to those working on the London Olympics. The app provides a way for site managers to use their iPhones once they spot infringements on site. The new app gives the contractor the ability to record and action sub-contractors to clean-up by a set date or face penalties. Sending warning notices ensures that they act quickly to rectify the problem preventing environmental and safety issues arising and ensures that the main contractor does not incur additional cleaning costs. It also contains a handy dashboard which displays all items, including the status of the number of pending, late or closed-out issues. The Site Clean Up app also contains reporting functionality so that a user can benchmark the performance of different sub-contractors. Peter Daly, Managing Director and co-founder SmartBuilder Software said: "In today's economic environment no building contractor can afford these sort of wastages and inefficiencies. Site Clean Up was developed as a response to a need builders were telling us about."

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