

Balla SEC Energy Master Plan: Business and Community Building Opportunities

The non-domestic sector in the Balla SEC amounts to 44% of all energy use. This includes estimated agriculture energy use (diesel and electricity mainly) as well as the energy use of the businesses in SEC. Of this, just 36% of this energy is for appliances, equipment and heating. Transport, specifically diesel, accounts for the remaining 64%.

There are opportunities for achieving energy efficiencies and fossil fuel reductions through adoption of efficiencies, renewable energy sources as well as reduction of the reliance on diesel as a transport and machinery fuel.

SME Level Efficiencies and Retrofits

There are SEAI supported programs to assist SMEs identify where they can reduce their energy demands and fossil fuel use. These are outlined in the Appendix below

Small businesses Grant

The Energy Efficiency Grant, available through the Local Enterprise Offices, will provide funding to small businesses to invest in more energy efficient technology. It supports the investment in technologies and equipment identified in a Green for Micro Report, GreenStart Report or an SEAI Energy Audit with 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum grant of €5,000. The aim of the scheme is to reduce the impact of enterprises on the environment thereby increasing the agility and resilience of these businesses. [LINK to more information](#)

Non-Domestic Microgeneration Scheme

The [Non-Domestic Microgen Scheme](#) from the SEAI funding ranges from €2,700 to €162,600, to support a wide range of businesses to switch to solar electricity. The scheme provides grant supports for PV installation up to 1,000 kWp (1MWp) capacity. This scheme helps towards the installation of solar PV for business, school, community centres, or other non-profit organisations. PV technology reduces commercial electricity costs and increases security of supply, while enhancing a positive sustainability image. It should be remembered that on site PV generation is carbon neutral while grid electricity has a carbon intensity of 234gCO₂/kWh. The

scale of installation grant funding is for installation sizes greater than 6 kWp up to 1,000 kW.

The grant for 6kW is up to €2,400.

EXEED Grant Scheme

The [EXEED Grant Scheme](#) – SEAI is designed for organisations who are planning an energy investment project. Grant support of up to €1,000,000 per project is available.¹

Support Scheme for Renewable Heat

[The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat](#) – SEAI is open to commercial, industrial, agricultural, district heating, public sector, and other non-domestic heat users. The scheme offers 30% of installation costs of selected renewable technologies.

Community Grant

[The Grants for Sustainable Community Projects](#) – SEAI support energy efficiency community projects through capital funding, partnerships, and technical support. The scheme empowers Businesses, Public Sector Organisations, Communities, Housing Associations and Local Authorities to lead deep energy efficient upgrades on the buildings.

Accelerated Capital Allowance

The [Accelerated Capital Allowance](#) – SEAI is a tax incentive encouraging investment in energy saving technology. Companies and sole traders that operate and pay corporation tax in Ireland can avail of the scheme. Technologies and products supported by ACA need to be on the [SEAI's Triple E Products Register](#).

¹ https://www.seai.ie/business-and-public-sector/business-grants-and-supports/exeed-certified-grant/?gclid=CjwKCAjw-eKpBhAbEiwAqFL0moImFi7qM5JSOw8K6NaMlMKsyw2LL8qohWZBL6ZaaWVLQk5gOITLahoC6JQQAvD_BwE

Electric Vehicle Grants (SEAI) – co-funding

The Electric Vehicle Grants – SEAI provides grant supports towards the purchase of new electric vehicles for business and public entities. Grant aided vehicles are typically small goods carrying vans with a technically permissible maximum mass not exceeding 3500kg. A maximum grant of €7,600 is available for qualifying EVs.



Figure 1: Ford e-Transit - would qualify for €7,600 grant

Energy Contracting Support Scheme

The Energy Contracting Support Scheme – SEAI provides financial assistance to implement energy efficiency and decarbonisation projects. The Scheme aims to support the direct external consultancy and/or specialist advisory costs related to project appraisal and procurement of pay-for-performance energy contracts.

Climate Action Fund

We propose that the eligible community buildings audited in this EMP, prepare as a matter of urgency an application for funding for energy upgrades to the call for projects for the upcoming climate action fund programme. This will open in September. The SEAI mentor will be able to advise on the preparation of these applications.

Non-Domestic Transport Opportunities

The BEU showed that transport fuel accounts for a large proportion of the non-domestic sector in general at 62%. This can be explained by the fact that Agriculture and goods transport have significant diesel demand, and both these are vital elements of the commercial life of the SEC.

Tractors and machinery

These were seen to contribute 62% to the non-domestic transport energy use and emissions. While reduction in these emissions would contribute to sustainability, this is an area where it is almost impossible to achieve significant energy efficiencies.

There are also very significant technical barriers to switching from ICE tractors to EV (or [FCEV](#)) in the short term – there are some market-ready EV tractors or construction machinery examples, for example the Fendt e100 Vario², but this is a relatively early stage higher-cost technology which we do not see as a short term opportunity.

However, it may be possible to realise emission reductions opportunities from the adoption of [HVO](#). The caveats previously made around the true sustainability of the feedstocks of HVO remain. And it should be borne in mind that the claims of 95% reduction in CO₂ over diesel are based largely on the idea that the feedstock sequesters carbon as it grows. Thus, it is a 'low carbon lifecycle' fuel rather than a low carbon fuel. However, it should be possible to establish a supply-chain certification system even in the short term where HVO fuels of European origin from ethically and sustainably managed sources can be guaranteed. This action should be used effectively as a first step: a way to get commercial and agricultural diesel users to consider looking to alternatives.

Technically a switch from diesel to HVO is achievable today. There are HVO suppliers in Westmeath. There is an economic cost in that HVO is more expensive by approximately 40% than diesel, but construction companies or farmers may be willing to absorb this in the interests of increased sustainability and bearing in mind that fuel costs represent a pre-tax business or farm expense.

The difference between the costs of the two fuels is a matter of policy. Diesel as a fossil fuel product is heavily subsidised where it is produced. It is heavily taxed in Ireland where it is distributed. Both subsidy and tax levels are political judgements. It may be that the level of taxation in Ireland for fossil fuels in the future is raised to account for the cost of the established unsustainability of its use.

The **transition to HVO should be seen as a stop-gap measure however** in advance of a move towards electrification: either directly with battery operated vehicles (though these may be ultimately found to be impracticable) or indirectly through fuel cell electric systems (that use hydrogen as their energy storage). HVO produces carbon at the exhaust: it's relatively lesser emissions over diesel are based on the fact that the feedstock (for example rapeseed oil) takes up carbon as it grows. We will discuss HVO in greater detail below in the Appendix, but state here that our

² <https://www.farmersjournal.ie/machinery/news/fendt-launches-e100-vario-electric-tractor-in-ireland-and-uk-875498>

view is that **HVO is not feasibly a long term or widely adoptable replacement for Ireland's diesel use.**

Smaller Goods Vehicles (< 2 tonnes)

These contributed 17% of non-domestic transport emissions.

GVs less than 2 tonnes are in effect vans. There are numerous EVs on the market that can meet the requirements of this transport segment up to transit type vans. There is a very good independent guide to EV vans costs available in Ireland [here](#).

The price per km for an electric van will be very competitive as the owner will be more easily able to avail of night rate electrical tariffs. This could provide the electric van owner with a cost of € 9.30 per 100km³. For comparison, a Ford transit requires 7.2L/100km which would cost € 12.74/100km⁴.

The SEAI have a useful guide (Switching to Electric Vehicles A Guide for Businesses) [here](#). Transitioning the small goods vehicles fleet to electric vehicles has clear economic as well as sustainability logic and this are a medium-term opportunity that the SEC could disseminate to the local businesses.

Large Goods vehicles > 5 tonnes

The power demand of these vehicles, were they to be battery powered, would require a significant reconfiguration of our electrical grid. Thus, again HVO has proven its feasibility in this sector. Circle K fuels its delivery trucks with HVO, and other large transport operators have signalled their willingness to switch to this more sustainable fuel. There is a supplier of HVO in the SEC.

³ 16.kWh per 100km @ €0.21/kWh night rate.

⁴ Assuming diesel price of €1.77/L

Appendix SME Supports

SEAI Energy Academy

The SEAI Energy Academy is a free, online, e-learning platform designed to help businesses increase their energy efficiency and reduce their energy related costs.

The SEAI Energy Academy allows anyone to learn with short, interactive, animated modules. It's mobile friendly and offers flexible, self-paced learning with access available 24/7.

Business owners, CEOs, managers, and facilities teams can join the SEAI Energy Academy and start learning. The SEAI Energy Academy courses are also a great way of engaging, up-skilling, and retaining staff. Courses can be implemented into any business's sustainability strategy helping them embed energy efficiency across their organisation.

[LINK HERE](#)

Climate Toolkit 4 Business

The Toolkit helps your business get started on your zero-carbon journey. It recommends the most impactful steps to understand and address your environmental impacts.

This Toolkit provides practical and cost-effective actions that every business can take to support this transformation and build resilience.

The Energy bills / usage information calculator asks how much electricity and gas your business uses every year on average.

The Business travel information calculator asks for vehicle fuels (petrol or diesel) volumes or cost as well as flights taken for business purposes in a year.

Waste and Water Usage is also tracked.

[LINK HERE](#)

SME Energy Audits

An energy audit is an important step for businesses that want to save money, save energy, and enhance their brand. An energy audit may be carried out on buildings, processes, or systems and it is a three-step process which involves preparation, a site visit and reporting. The audit report that compiles the findings will help you to understand:

- how much energy your business uses.
- the equipment and processes that use the most energy.
- what actions you should take to save energy, and their estimated cost and impact

SEAI's Support Scheme for Energy Audits (SSEA) will offer SMEs a €2,000 voucher towards the cost of a high-quality energy audit. In most cases, this will cover the total cost of the audit. Application to the scheme is easy, with automatic approval for eligible businesses.

Businesses applying to the scheme must be:

- non-obligated entities
- tax compliant
- registered in the Republic of Ireland
- spend at least €10,000 on energy per year at the site being audited.

Non-obligated parties (that is those who are eligible for the scheme) are: small and medium enterprises (SMEs), or public sector bodies with a useful floor area less than 500m² and spending less than €35,000 per year on energy.

SEAI SME Guide to Energy Efficiency

This document is an excellent short guide for SMEs. This practical guide is based on the real-world experiences of a team of professionals who've been helping companies improve their energy efficiency for decades, so the recommendations are tried and tested.

'Based on experience, the average SME could reduce its energy bill by up to 30% by implementing energy efficiency measures. Typically, 10% saving can be achieved with little or no capital cost. Some investment may be required to get the remaining 20% but the payback is generally around 1.5 years. You won't make a better investment!'

SME Guide to Energy Efficiency



Figure 2: SEAI SME Guide to Energy Efficiency: [LINK HERE](#)

PSV: EV Taxi Grants

: <https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ESPSV-Grant-2025-Information-Guide.pdf>

Commercial EVs

The SEAI gives grant supports towards the purchase of new N1 (light commercial vehicle) category electric vehicles for businesses and public entities. N1 category vehicles are typically small goods carrying vans with a technically permissible maximum mass not exceeding 3500kg.

A maximum grant of €3,500 is available for qualifying N1S category BEVs when purchased commercially. Approved BEVs with a list price of over €60,000 or less than €14,000 will not receive a grant. It should be noted that these grants apply to new vehicles only and cannot be claimed on second hand vehicles.

The SEAI also supports the purchase of EV 'Panel Vans' with a grant of €7600 for vans costing up to €90,000.

[More details here.](#)

Non-Domestic PV

Through the SEAI it is possible to receive government grant aid towards the installation of solar PV for your business, farm, or community building.

The Non-Domestic Microgen Grant (NDMG) provides financial assistance to help businesses and other sectors to install solar PV panels to generate electricity on site. This technology reduces commercial electricity costs and improves your sustainability by reducing CO2 emissions. Grant funding is available for systems up to a maximum 1,000kWp (i.e. 1 MW) although the installations we envisage in Balla SEC will be much smaller than this (i.e. typically 10kWp).

Grant amounts available are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: PV Grants for Businesses, Farms and Community Buildings

Solar PV system	Grant value
1kWp	€900
2kWp	€1,800
3kWp	€2,100
4kWp	€2,400
5kWp	€2,400
6kWp	€2,400
7kWp - 20kWp	€300/kWp
21kWp - 200kWp	€200/kWp
201kWp - 1000kWp (1MWp)	€150/kWp

SEAI: [Grants for PV in businesses and farms](#)

SEAI: [Solar PV for Business Best Practice Guide](#)

Planning for PV Commercial and Community Premises

Solar PV systems installed in a business, industrial, or community resource setting under 50 sq. m (and representing less than 50% of the total roof area) are exempt from planning. A 50m2 installation would be about 8-10kWp. Larger solar PV systems will typically require planning permission.

Planning for PV: Farms

Solar panels on houses or agricultural structures, or within their curtilage, is exempted development subject to certain conditions.

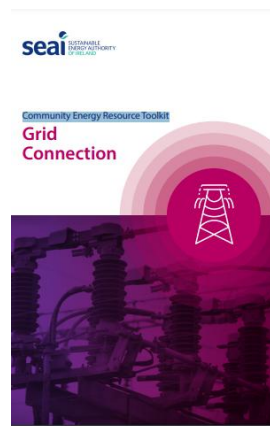
Ground-mounted solar — exempted if the array does not exceed 25m2; and the height of the free-standing solar array does not exceed 2m. (25m2 would be a 4-5kWp installation)

Roof-mounted — exempted if the array does not exceed 50m² or 50% of the total roof area, whichever is the lesser; and, the solar panels must be a minimum of 50cm from the edge of the wall or roof on which they are mounted.

Buildings subject to conservation status and all larger ground-mounted installations require planning permission. If there is any doubt it is advisable to contact the local planning officer before any expense is incurred.

Community Generation at Scale Resources

Community Energy Resource Toolkit:
[LINK](#)



Community level PV Guide: [LINK](#)

