



Submission from Just Forests to the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on Green Paper for Energy.

30 July, 2014

Just Forests creates awareness on the importance of good forest management to our economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being. Our particular focus is on Ireland's dependency on imported timber. Ireland has the largest per-capital consumption of tropical timber in the EU. In Ireland, we use tropical timber in areas of construction that could be better served by an Irish-grown alternative timber species. Thus minimising our carbon footprint significantly.

Just Forests fully endorses the **Stop Climate Change Submission** to your Department that calls for the incentivising of behavioural change by ensuring that the most sustainable choices are the easy ones accessible to all and must be prioritised. Information sharing is central.

As a small Irish development education (DE) charity using our dependency on timber as a 'hook' to campaign on climate change, poverty alleviation and species decline we are continuously being asked what can people do. To this end, support for our public information campaign would be helpful, building awareness and knowledge about the everyday choices of forest-products people make and the implications of these choices.

Wood is a natural, renewable energy. Its uses impacts so many aspects of our lives-economically, socially, culturally and environmentally. Our lives are greatly enhanced by this natural forest resource. Ireland's reliance on imported timber and wood-based products is cause for concern now and going forward as traditional sources of timber in developing economies are under severe threat of over-exploitation. With increasing global populations this pressure will only increase. Economies in transition across Africa, South America and S.E Asia will increase their usage of their own resources such as timber leaving less for export to countries like Ireland.

Our current energy mix, of which 76 per cent comes from fossil fuels, is not sustainable. Just Forests favours a greater portion of renewable energy being prioritised in the short term, and phasing out of fossil fuels as soon as possible. Truly sustainable sources of energy should be encouraged and supported and investment should not go into short-term, false solutions such as hydraulic fracturing or biofuels that do not deliver significant reductions in emissions.

Just Forests is calling on the Irish Government to increase our forest cover significantly to meet our timber needs and wood-energy needs. This is help reduce our reliance on imported timber/wood-based products, increase our own forest cover, create jobs and make Ireland self-reliant on its own natural resources.

We also call for a **National Timber Procurement Policy** to be put in place immediately to ensure that Ireland meets its obligations under the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR). *'Across the world, forests, trees on farms, and agroforestry systems play a crucial role in the livelihoods of rural people by providing employment, energy, nutritious foods and a wide range of other goods and services. They have tremendous potential to contribute to sustainable development and to a greener economy.'* (Excerpt: State of the World's Forests (SOFO) 2014- Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations(FAO)).

Public Awareness and Education

The government's National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), 2014-2020, was launched by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), in July 2014. It was developed by the DES, in consultation with key stakeholders. It provides a framework to support the contribution that the education sector is making and will continue to make towards a more sustainable future at a number of levels: individual, community, local, national and international.

This strategy is primarily influenced by the national strategy on sustainable development, *Our Sustainable Future - A Framework for Sustainable Development in Ireland* (referred to in the document as *Our Sustainable Future*), which was published by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in 2012. It is also framed within the current context of limited financial resources. The result is an ESD strategy that seeks to challenge individuals, organisations and society as a whole, but particularly in educational contexts, through recommendations that are pragmatic rather than aspirational in nature.

Just Forests are calling on your department to support organisations with track records in ESD in Ireland to continue to create awareness and engage the Irish public in informing their choices and obligations on energy and sustainability matters going forward.

We believe that the government's National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is one such vehicle for engagement.

Decisions on energy policy must be informed by clear principles. Recognising the threat climate change poses to biological diversity, lives and livelihoods, in particular the most vulnerable around the world, **equity and planetary limits must be guiding principles in the decisions we make.**

A fair, factual and inclusive debate on the choices that we as a society need to make has to begin. Framing the debate within the context of the challenges posed by climate change is essential. Climate change is now the context within which we all operate, and should be the lens through which these choices are framed. There are considerable opportunities presented by transitioning to a low carbon economy, which requires further highlighting, however there will also be difficult decisions. Understanding the trade-offs within this context will make the hard choices easier to accept.