

Summary of the Kinsale Energy Descent Plan

*Vision without action is merely a dream
Action without vision only passes the time
Vision with action can change the world
Joel Barker*

Introduction

Supplies of oil and natural gas will diminish in the future and though there is much debate on when Peak Oil will occur (i.e. the peak of maximum extraction of oil) leading petroleum experts consider it likely to occur in the next decade. Richard Heinburg, invites us in his book "The Party's Over" to consider how we use energy and how we would manage with 10% less, 25% less, then 50%, then 75%. Once we reach Peak Oil, we can expect an annual decline of around 2% available energy per year.

Kinsale's Energy Descent Plan outlines how we can adapt for a future with less available energy.

David Holmgren, the co-founder of Permaculture asks us - "so do we wait at the top of the mountain and watch the storm clouds gathering and the light fading or do descend now and make the best use of the resources that are left".

*Kinsale's Energy Descent Plan, started in 2005, is a road map to
*Sustainability *Localization *Abundance*

"Classical economics is based on continuous growth" (Colin Campbell) and the economist Richard Douthwaite outlines that "the characteristics of the growth economy are so present and so widespread that it may even be difficult to perceive an alternative." However, the growth economy relies on cheap oil. Thus, with diminishing oil supplies we will need to reevaluate the basis of our economy and reconsider how we measure wealth.

The vision for Kinsale in 2021 is a thriving community acting as a role model for others.

The Energy Descent Plan will also mean that instead of "relentlessly depleting limited resources and exploiting our fragile biosphere" we will reduce our CO₂ emissions, essential if we wish to counteract the effects of global warming.

The Kinsale Energy Descent Plan looks at: food; energy; housing; transport; waste; education; youth and community; health; tourism and The Sustainability Centre which will be the hub for putting this plan into action. [✓ Indicates this project has been initiated.]

Food

Now

Ireland imports 90% of its food and almost the same of its energy. We have become dependent on a totally non-dependable system.

"It now takes a surprising amount of energy to produce a person's food, on average one unit of fossil energy is required to produce one unit of energy in the food and then 10 units of fossil energy to process, pack and transport that food to the consumer....and as the cost of fossil energy rises as a result of oil and gas depleting..." (Richard Douthwaite) the local food market will be the best possible place to buy food.

The Vision

Kinsale will be almost self-reliant for food and food growing will be an integral part of town. Orchards and community gardens will be incorporated into parks and greens. There will be a thriving local food co-op.

How to get there?

- A think tank of food producers and food sellers
- Appoint a local food officer
- Set up a Local Food Partnership
- Prepare a Local Food Plan ✓
- Set up a Farmer's Market ✓
- Set up an Organic Food Co-op ✓
- Develop Kinsale as a Slow Food Town
- Courses on organic market gardening by KFEC
- Easy garden scheme in town, seedlings, compost ✓
- Community gardens scheme ✓
- Plant orchards - 1601 fruit trees for Kinsale ✓
- School garden scheme ✓
- Reward system for using local food - for hospital, B&B's, Hotels, restaurants ✓
- New 'edible' landscaping policy in town
- Develop a 'mini-eden' project - an eco-tourist attraction
- 'Tasty Town' competition like tidy towns
- New agricultural developments:-organic dairy herds; aquaculture system in town; niche markets e.g. mushrooms, unusual vegetables and grains.

Energy

Now

Energy is essential for the treatment of water, to cook and store food and for heat and light. Thus energy is vital to communities and it is essential it should not be wasted. In 2021 people will look back in horror on the amount of energy it took to sustain our lifestyle.

The vision

Kinsale will be a carbon-neutral town with energy supplied by a number of renewable sources e.g. wind.

How to get there?

- Community awareness has to be raised - everyone has to be energy conscious in their day to day lives e.g. distribution of relevant ENFO (Environmental Information Service] leaflet; Solar panels could be put on public lamp-posts as a very public way of saying that there are other ways to get energy ✓
- Develop a wind farm in the Kinsale environs
- Other sustainable energy schemes would include; solar panels; short rotation woodlands and combined heat and power schemes ✓
- Energy rating scheme to be implemented for buildings ✓

Housing

Now

Sustainable housing is usually self-built and self driven

The vision

All houses will be built sustainably, with high levels of energy efficiency and with a high proportion of local sustainable materials.

How to get there?

- Appoint a green buildings' officer
- TTK to develop a 'guide document'
- New local authority housing to be built sustainably
- Kinsale Town Council to publish sustainable building criteria
- Lobby for planning changes at a national level
- Provide training events for builders

- Provide workshops for owner on how to retro-fit old buildings to a high insulation standard (Liaise with Cork Energy Agency)
- Promote research to look at materials that could be sourced locally and used for insulation
- Liaise with GAP Global Action Plan), Cork; House of Tomorrow scheme, Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) ✓
- Promote sustainable house heating systems: solar; passive solar, wood pellets/chip ✓
- Build communities instead of just housing developments

Transport

Now

Car-dependent culture

The Vision

Kinsale will have adopted eco and people friendly transport systems.

How to get there?

- Appoint a transport officer
- Improve Public transport significantly
- Centre of town to be pedestrianised and bike friendly routes established, promotion of car and lift sharing via LINKS (see community networking) ✓
- Walk to school initiatives
- Biodiesel station in town
- Horse and cart taxi - tourist attraction
- Land train ✓

Waste

Now

We're getting better, very slowly!

The Vision

Kinsale will be able to deal with its own waste

How to get there?

- Appoint a zero waste manager
- Community education ✓
- Community composting - training ✓
- Anaerobic digesters ✓
- Promote good packaging
- Local shops to promote sustainable packaging
- Liaise with Teagasc and Environmental Protection Agency to minimize agricultural waste and develop energy from waste projects ✓

Education and Community Awareness

The whole community will need to learn new skills, revive old skills and reevaluate how we live our lives.

How?

- Think Tank for teachers
- Local people with skills to be invited into schools
- School garden schemes ✓
- Practical sustainability / permaculture to become a school subject
- Have sustainability action plan for schools and an energy awareness week where schools/ homes/ businesses try to use 25% less energy for the week ✓

- Continuous assessment of what has been achieved and what needs to be done to educate the community, especially the youth for a less energy dependent future.

Youth

The youth of Kinsale are especially important as they need to be empowered with the necessary skills and the focus for their future

How?

- Establish a youth opinion forum leading to a youth manifesto for Kinsale
- Photo or Art competition portraying images for the future- best and worst scenarios.
- Offer sustainability course to young people- after school, transition year ✓
- Green work experience for students
- Establish a Kinsale Youth Mayor
- Establish an international youth conference and festival (by video link!)
- Youth café/ space in the Sustainability Centre

Health

In the future the establishment and maintenance of good health will be as important as the treatment of the disease. There will be an Integrated Community Health Center, a sustainable Community Hospital and a Community Medicinal herb garden.

Tourism

Kinsale will become a town at the forefront of Active Sustainable Design, and Eco tourism could be used as a vehicle for building the infrastructures that will sustain the town beyond tourism. Kinsale needs to prepare for a time when long haul and even short haul visitors will be fewer and the local economy needs to be less reliant on 'overseas tourism'. New Eco Tourist attractions will include:

- Mini-eden project
- Local edible landscaping ✓
- Cob-house village - to be used by students for 9 months and tourists for 3 months.
- Green Accreditations
- Slow Food Town
- A vibrant example of a Transition Town ✓

Community Networking

Community networking will be essential to galvanise this Energy Descent Plan and to make the vision of a vibrant and thriving town in 2021 a reality. A website LINKS will be developed for the Kinsale Community. This will facilitate CORE (Community Organisations Resource Exchange) based on core community values, core environmental values and core ethics. This will lead to a Time Bank or LETS (Local exchange Trading System) which could function as a local currency.

Other features would include:

- Online discussion forum
- Freebies Page, that is hand on what you don't need anymore
- Community details
- Listings
- Youth site

The Sustainability Centre - the Hub of Transition Town Kinsale

- A self reliant Co-operative with a number of posts: local food officer, green building officer; transport officer; zero waste officer; local economy officer and eco tourism officer
- Organic green shop
- Market Garden
- Community Composting system
- Training and workshop space
- Youth café

Who wrote the Energy Descent Plan?

With thanks to: Anna Aherne, Deirdre Barry, Jan Brady, Diane Carton, Ben Girling, Diana Good, Carmel Geary, Bridget Hannan, Rob Hopkins, Becci Neal, Abbie North, Richard O'Callaghan, Michelle Walsh, Pernilla West

Further Reading

Downtwaite, Richard

The Growth Illusion - how economic growth has enriched the few, impoverished the many and endangered the planet.

Green Books

Heinburg, Richard

The Party's Over- oil, war and the fate of industrial society

Clairview Books, 2003

Holmgren, David

Permaculture- principals and pathways beyond sustainability

Holmgren Design Press, 2003

Lahti, Torbjorn and James, Sarah

The Natural Step for Communities

New Society Publishers, 2004