



Recommendations for the Quality Renewables programme Draft for Consultation 22/02/06

International experience in support programmes for the deployment of renewable energy systems shows that quality management is a key success factor to achieve a stable and sustainable growth.

The following proposal outlines a Quality Renewables programme to be implemented in support of the grant scheme announced by the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. It is based on the recommendations of two studies¹ commissioned by SEI and a review of successful European programmes in this area.

A number of measures proposed (notably training and certification) are closely related to the activities of the Renewable Energy Installers Academy (REIA), a project jointly managed by SEI and Action Renewables (NI) and funded by the Interreg programme. Due to the nature of its funding, the geographical scope of this project is currently limited to Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland. It is therefore recommended that funds are allocated as a matter of priority for the extension of the REIA to the rest of the Republic of Ireland in order to address with diligence and cost-effectively the needs of the grant scheme and its associated quality programme.

The Quality Renewables programme outlined hereafter has been split in two phases:

- Phase I with measures to be implemented from the early stage of the grant scheme;
- Phase II to be implemented on the basis of the REIA's extension to the rest of the Republic.

Overall, the Quality Programme should be designed with consumer protection in mind, however it should endeavour to be administratively as simple as possible. Direct interaction with the renewable heat sector at every stage of the programme, and a fair

¹ Campaign for Take Off for solar thermal energy in Ireland. Danish Energy Authority, 2004
Campaign for Take Off for renewable heat pumps in Ireland. arsenal research, 2004

but flexible approach to its implementation, should ensure a strong support from the industry.

Phase I – ready for public launch of grant scheme
1. Quality of the Equipment:
1.a. Quality Standards Define minimum quality and performance requirements on specific components, based on international best practice and according to European norms or equivalent. Where applicable, quality certification (e.g. Solarkeymark for solar thermal or DACH for heat pumps) can be required or highlighted in equipment listing. <u>Comments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Current criteria only apply to key components (e.g. solar collectors) for which test reports from accredited test centres can be obtained. There is scope to include quality/performance criteria for other components of the systems (e.g. solar storage tanks), to be vetted (e.g. min. insulation level) on the basis of a declaration of conformity.</i>
1.b. Equipment Approval Process Establish equipment approval process: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- consolidate SEI-REIO's current approval process for RES-Heat systems;- create a database of 'approved' equipment for each technology which allows simple updating and publication;- invite companies to submit products for approval;- communicate with companies on result of approval;- update and publish list on a regular basis. <u>Comments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Design approval scheme to ensure compatibility with grant awarding process and requirements of the REIA's training, certification and inspection process (Phase II).</i>

2. Quality of the Installations:

2.a. Quality Charter

Set-up a Quality Charter for installers that would set the framework of their involvement in the grant scheme and the minimum quality standards they are required to adhere to when providing their installation services. The Quality Charter would cover his/her practices, qualifications and training, installation procedures, equipment used, after-sales services, collaboration with SEI, external inspections, etc.

The scheme would involve:

- defining and publishing the Quality Charter;
- inviting installers to sign the charter;
- creating a list of participating installers which allows simple updating and publication;

Comments:

A Quality Charter has been implemented in France for the Plan Soleil successfully. As in Qualisol France, the Irish charter could require that installers demonstrate that he/she has received training by product manufacturer/supplier or by a recognised training provider. It will be necessary in due course to define what constitutes a minimum training standard.

2.b. Standard Offer Form / Quotation Form

Introduce a standard Offer Form to facilitate consumers' assessment and comparison of the services and equipment they are quoted for. Such a form would define, per technology, the items that are quoted for, the terms of reference of the service provided, the rights of the consumer, warranties, etc. This form could be used to document the grant application.

2.c. Commissioning Checklist

Introduce a standard checklist to be used by installers when commissioning their installations. This Commissioning Checklist would provide a template and reporting document for their commissioning procedure. This form should then be used to document the grant application.

2.d. Inspections

Inspections are an important of the quality control programme. It is proposed that during Phase II, these inspections are carried out as part of the certification (and re-certification) process of the installers trained by the REIA. At Phase I, it is proposed to use technical experts to pilot a limited inspection programme in preparation of Phase II.

This could take place as follow:

- establish inspection procedures;
- carry out limited number of random inspections;

- up skill a pool of independent inspectors who will take the relay during Phase II;
- establish a knowledge base using inspection reports and transfer knowledge to REIA and RES-HEAT industry;
- establish 'redress' procedures to deal with problematic cases.

3. Collaboration with the RES-Heat Industry

Consultation

The RES-HEAT industry is a key stakeholder of the grant scheme, not only as a beneficiary of the scheme but also an essential component of its actual delivery. Engaging with the industry is a key success factor for the scheme and this requires effective consultation. This can happen in different formats at key stages of the scheme:

- before launch: invite feedback from selected representatives by email or at a workshop;
- after the launch: invite feedback on a regular basis through a formal survey or an annual workshop;
- during the implementation of the scheme: SEI helpdesk (direct line of communication between industry and dedicated SEI representatives).

4. Information

It is fundamental to establish the right information systems in advance of the launch of the scheme to meet effectively the needs of the following target groups:

- consumers to encourage uptake of the grant scheme and facilitate the application process;
- RES-HEAT industry to ensure that they are familiar with the procedures and requirements of the scheme for themselves (points 1,2,3) and so that they can inform and advise their clients;
- all other agencies and organisations that can support the implementation of the scheme.

Information systems should include as a minimum:

- dedicated helpdesk as a first port of call for applicants;
- SEI-REIO and SEI call centres;
- SEI's website;
- participating suppliers and installers in the RES-HEAT industry;
- local energy agencies, citizens information centres, etc.

Phase II

4. Training and Certification

4.1 Build upon the REIA experience (see description in attachment) in the Interreg Region and collaborate with other training providers (industry led, RE Skillnet) to develop the infrastructure required for the training and certification of installers on an All-Island basis.

4.2 Make it a requirement that a renewable heat system has to be installed by a certified installer to be eligible for granting (upgrade from Phase I quality charter).

4.3 Maintain a register of certified installers and publish contact list widely.

5. Quality Control

5.1 Building on Phase I (2.d.), establish a quality control scheme to provide inspections by highly trained independent inspectors:

- for a sample installations carried out by certified installers;
- randomly, as a basis for renewal of installers certification and at any stage as a quality control mechanism.

5.2. Consider establishing a 'Quality Board' (within RES-HEAT approved installers list) with the authority to dismiss installers in contravention of the quality charter.

5.3. Continue developing knowledge base on the basis of the inspection reports.

6. Improve quality and performance

At some stage during the implementation of the scheme, it is possible to introduce mechanisms which will foster the improvement of quality in the market place, for example:

- independent analysis and rating of equipment by consumer organisations (on the model of Test-Achat in Germany);
- Organisation of competitions for high profile projects;
- link level of grant to performance of the systems;
- set up a catalogue of products comparing quality and performance data on a consistent basis.