

Below are extracts from two climate-focused news articles published recently on the topics of global growth in clean energy (The Guardian 06th June) and an analysis of how results in the recent EU elections may impact climate targets (The Independent 10th June). Also included are two positive local Irish news stories on wind energy (Wind Energy Ireland 07th June) and the use of solar power at Dublin Airport (MSN 10 June). All as referenced below.

This week our news focus is on the global growth of clean energy vs fossil fuels and how the EU parliamentary elections may impact its climate ambitions. While locally, we reflect on Ireland's current wind energy generation and plans for a new solar farm at Dublin Airport.



Will the recent shift to the right in European Elections pose a challenge to the EU's climate goals.

The Independent (2024) highlights a clear shift towards the far right in the EU parliament, at the cost of Green Party candidates. Nonetheless, the EU climate agenda isn't facing only setbacks. Countries like Denmark and the Netherlands have gained their first or increased Green representation in the EU Parliament. Additionally, Ursula von der Leyen and the EPP party, key advocates for the Green Deal, continue to lead the Parliament for another term.

A sweeping victory for ring-wing parties in the European Parliament's elections is raising fears that the continent could see its approach to tackling climate change weakened. While some ballots were still being counted last Monday, provisional results from the four-day election showed eurosceptic nationalists are poised to play a much bigger role in the European Parliament, diminishing the status of mainstream liberals and Greens.

Most of the seats won by far-right parties have come at the expense of Green parties, indicating a shift in the priorities of European voters on issues like trade, migration and the climate crisis. Projections showed the Green faction was pushed from fourth into sixth place, with only 53 seats. The biggest losses for the Greens and liberals came from France and Germany, traditional environmentalist strongholds. French president Emmanuel Macron's party faced a heavy defeat at the hands of Marine Le Pen's National Rally, prompting Mr. Macron to call snap legislative elections. Acknowledging the scale of his party's defeat, Mr. Macron said in an address: "I've heard your message, your concerns, and I won't leave them unanswered. "Far-right parties ... are progressing everywhere in the continent. It is a situation to which I cannot resign myself."

In Germany, chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party (SPD) came third, scoring its worst-ever EU election result. The Greens also suffered a heavy defeat, losing nine of their 25 seats in the EU legislature. President Ursula von der Leyen is on track to remain head of the European Commission until 2029, leading a more climate-sceptic parliament. Even before the elections, Ms. von der Leyen's policies on climate action had become more relaxed in response to growing resistance, a phenomenon dubbed the "green lash".

Despite this, she declared on Monday: "The centre is holding. We won the European elections. We are by far the strongest party. We are the anchor of stability."

European Greens co-leader Bas Eickhout accepted that the results were concerning but he said there was hope as some countries voted for Green representatives for the first time. Green parties gained one seat in Denmark and formed a Green-Left coalition that narrowly defeated the far-right in the Netherlands.

The rise of the far-right in today's elections is extremely concerning for all those who believe in a democratic European Union and in just and equal societies," Mr Eickhout said in a statement. "The losses in Germany and France are obviously a blow, [but] at the same time, in many countries the voters recognised the solutions of the Greens and elected MEPs from green parties in countries which had never sent Greens to the European Parliament. "Given the multiple crises we face, we must not deny the problems ahead, but to work to find a way forward," he said.

Pre-election surveys had already indicated increased support for politicians advocating weaker green policies. Europe-wide farmers' protests, from the Netherlands to Greece, were seen as a backlash against 2020's European Green Deal, a policy package aimed at transitioning the bloc's entire economy – from energy and transport to agriculture – to become greener, or carbon neutral, by 2050.

Independent (2024)

The Independent (2024) reports an acknowledgment that the enactment of climate-related legislation might face greater obstacles in the EU due to the rise of far-right parliamentarians. However, there is also a determined effort among Green party members and the central government to achieve the objectives outlined in the Green Deal, coupled with a conviction that climate change remains a high priority for voters.

After a major “green wave” in 2019 when a number of environmental leaders were elected, the bloc has been passing a raft of legislation to reduce planet heating greenhouse gas emissions, including a ban on the sale of new fossil fuel cars starting in 2035 and agricultural reforms. The bloc was also looking at a 2040 goal to slash emissions by 90 per cent, but it needs approval from both EU countries and the European Parliament. The rise of nationalist and populist parties is likely to make it much harder for the parliament to pass more laws on the climate crisis and agriculture policy over the next five years. “All new policies will be harder to pass. But backsliding is very unlikely,” Krzysztof Bolesła, Poland’s secretary of state for climate, told Reuters.

The Greens say they are determined to muster support for the implementation of the Green Deal. “The Green Deal is still Europe’s best tool to protect people, tackle the climate crisis and future-proof our continent,” Mr Eickhout said. “We call on other political groups, particularly EPP and Renew, to boost efforts to drive the Green Deal forward as the economic engine for Europe’s economy.” “We are ready to play our part and work with those who stand on the side of democracy and freedom for all and we will fight all who attack the values of the European Union.” Climate groups say the election results do not change the fact that the climate crisis remains an urgent threat to all Europeans.

“Whatever the final make-up of the new European Parliament, voters still rank climate change and saving nature among their top concerns, and a clear majority want the EU to take action in these areas in the next five years,” Greenpeace EU campaigner Ariadna Rodrigo said.

Independent (2024)

Investment in clean energy likely to be double the figure for fossil fuels in 2024, IEA says.



Meanwhile in its article this week , **The Guardian (2024)** highlights the continued growth in investment in clean energy projects, with the International Energy Agency (IEA) projecting a figure of \$2trillion for 2024, meaning that for every dollar going to fossil fuels today, almost \$2 are invested in clean energy. Nevertheless, the article points out that the current expenditure on oil and gas remains excessive if global carbon emission reduction goals are to be achieved.

Global investment in low-carbon electricity will rise to 10 times as much as fossil fuel power this year due to an increase in spending on solar projects, according to the International Energy Agency. The global energy watchdog has predicted that investment in clean energy including renewables and nuclear power as well as electric vehicles, power grids, energy storage, low-emissions fuels, efficiency improvements and heat pumps will reach \$2tn this year. The global clean energy investment figure, which topped fossil fuels for the first time last year, is likely to be double the \$1tn forecast for coal, gas and oil in 2024, the IEA said. “For every dollar going to fossil fuels today, almost \$2 are invested in clean energy,” said the IEA’s executive director, Fatih Birol.

However, spending on oil and gas is still too high to meet the world’s climate targets, according to Birol. Climate experts have warned that global climate targets will not be met if new investments are made into fossil fuels. Global coal investments have continued to rise, with more than 50GW of unabated coal-fired power approved last year, the highest since 2015. Global oil and gas investments are expected to increase by 7% in 2024 to reach \$570bn, after a similar rise in 2023, led predominantly by state-owned oil companies in the Middle East and Asia, according to the report.

These investments are broadly aligned with the forecast energy demand levels for 2030 based on current policies, but they are far higher than would be needed according to forecast models in which the world meet its climate goals, the IEA warned. Birol said oil and gas companies are “claiming to be part of the solution” but are continuing to spend on average just 4% of their investment budgets on clean energy projects, while national oil companies spend even less. The warning comes days after a separate IEA report revealed that the world is off track to meet the goal of tripling renewable electricity generation by 2030, a target viewed as vital to enable a swift global transition away from fossil fuels, despite record investments.

Guardian (2024)

The Guardian (2024) highlights that the surge in global green energy investment is primarily fueled by solar power technology, with China leading the charge. In 2023, China added as much new solar energy capacity as the entire world did the previous year, reports the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Global clean energy investment has been driven by spending on solar farms, which is on track to reach \$500bn this year, surpassing the investment in all other electricity generation technologies combined. This has been fuelled by a 30% fall in solar technology costs in the last two years and a rapid roll out of solar farms across China, which built as much new capacity in 2023 as the entire world did the year before, the IEA said.

“Solar power is entirely essential to the transformation of the global energy system,” Birol said. Investment in low-carbon electricity – which includes renewables and nuclear power – is likely to reach more than \$900bn this year, according to the report, 10 times higher than investment in gas and coal power generation. The proportion of global investment has swung further towards clean electricity sources since 2015, the year global governments signed the Paris climate accord, when it was twice the amount invested in fossil fuel-fired power.

China is expected to lead the world in clean energy investment this year, reaching an estimated \$675bn, through its investments in solar, lithium batteries and electric vehicles. Europe and the US are expected to invest \$370bn and \$315bn in clean energy respectively. Birol warned that more must be done to ensure that clean energy investment reaches “the places where it is needed most, in particular the developing economies where access to affordable, sustainable and secure energy is severely lacking today”.

Guardian (2024)

Wind farms provided 35 per cent of Ireland's electricity in first five months of 2024.



Wind Energy Ireland's 2024 report states that Irish wind farms, especially those in Cork last month, have significantly contributed to reducing Ireland's carbon emissions by over 4 million tonnes annually. The current output has decreased Ireland's dependence on imported fossil fuels and has been instrumental in lowering wholesale electricity prices.

The May Wind Energy report shows that Ireland's wind farms provided 35 per cent of the country's electricity over the first five months of 2024. The latest figures, published by Wind Energy Ireland, show that the demand for electricity during May 2024 increased slightly to 3,241 gigawatt-hours (GWh), up from 3,181 GWh in the same month last year. The share of electricity demand met by wind farms, at 21 per cent, was below the normal average for wind energy in May but the shortfall was partially compensated by a record month for solar power.

According to the report, the average wholesale price of electricity in Ireland per megawatt-hour (MWh) during May 2024 was €107.76. Prices on days with the most wind power saw the average cost of a MWh of electricity decrease to €88.08, rising to €118.77 on days when we relied almost entirely on fossil fuels.

Wind Energy Ireland (2024)

Dublin Airport will generate 10pc of its electricity with new on-site solar farm.



According to MSN (2024) , more than 10% of Dublin Airport’s electricity supply is to be provided by a new 28-acre solar farm. It is envisaged that this initiative will help Dublin Airport meet its net-zero carbon emissions targets by 2050. The Dublin Airport Authority(DAA) is also working with aviation and transport partners to find ways to reduce carbon emissions that are outside of its direct control . Cork Airport is also making strides towards sustainability with plans to implement solar energy solutions.

The 9MWp solar farm is currently under construction at the airport’s campus. Some 11,000 solar panels have already been installed by Enerpower, a renewable energy solutions provider, with 4,000 more to be added by the end of September. The airport authority said the solar photovoltaic (PV) panels were a “clean and renewable energy source, converting sunlight directly into electricity using PV cells and emitting no greenhouse gasses or pollutants.” Once in operation this autumn, the solar farm is expected to generate 7.46GWh per annum, which is 11.8pc of Dublin Airport’s annual consumption and the equivalent of powering approximately 1,600 houses for a year. This renewable energy source will help Dublin Airport meet its commitment to reduce its direct emissions by 51pc by 2030, which aligns with the public sector targets set as part of the National Climate Action Plan.

Cork Airport is also progressing plans for solar power on-site. It is designing an elevated solar farm over the existing ‘Holiday Blue’ surface car park, which will be submitted for planning in the next 12 months. It is intended that this 1.8 MWp solar farm will deliver up to 30pc of Cork Airport's energy needs when complete.

MSN (2024)

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