

# SPEECH: Republic of Ireland branch dinner

## Malcolm Brinded, EI President

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#### INTRO

Owen, distinguished guests and friends - thank you.

It's a huge pleasure to be back in this wonderful city..and truly a great privilege as President of the Energy Institute to address this wonderful occasion.

In the current climate where news seems relentlessly doom and gloom - let me start by highlighting a happy trend you may have missed...

We are all living longer.

Here's a chance for a quick side bet at your tables - hands up if you were born before 1955?

Now the rest of you, take a look at us young baby-boomers and guess, by how much has global average life expectancy changed since we were born...?

As they say, PLACE YOUR BETS NOW...

It's a staggering 50%.

Yes – global average life expectancy is up 24 years - from 48 in the early 1950s, to 72 years today.

In Africa it's up from just 36, to over 60 - and in Asia its up from 42 to over 70 years.

Whilst still far from universal, what an amazing improvement in the lot of the human race...

How has this happened?

Well, in just 25 years, global hunger has dropped 40% and infant mortality has halved. Since 2000, Malaria deaths have halved, as have deaths from HIV/AIDS. The list is endless.

It is of course down to advances in nutrition and medicine. But, enabling all of these, is a sustained increase in global GDP, and driving that has been a huge increase in access to energy.

China is the best illustration – with real GDP per head now over ten times what it was just in 1990. Imagine that: the average Chinese person is ten times wealthier in one generation. And energy use more than tripled to drive that growth.

By the way - it took the UK over 150 years to achieve that ten-fold increase in GDP per head, whilst here in Ireland with such impressive economic growth in recent decades you have done it in just two generations - since the 1960s.

But again, in both cases, the GDP growth needed a significant increase in energy to make it happen.

So we must never forget the benefits that access to affordable energy delivers. It's the bedrock of economic and social development, and central to nearly every major challenge and opportunity the world faces. Be it for jobs, food production, clean water, or increasing productivity and incomes - energy is essential for human wellbeing.

But it is still far from universal.

There are 1.1 billion people in the world without access to electricity.

And over 3 billion still do all their cooking on open fires inside their homes. With indoor air pollution a bigger killer than TB, malaria and HIV combined.

The good news is that technology is unlocking new, lower cost supplies of energy, right around the world.

Take solar, where, because of tumbling costs, a three-light household solar system in Africa now costs less to buy in just one year than the kerosene bill for one smoky, dim lamp

Or offshore wind, where costs are falling dramatically, and onshore wind, which is now the cheapest form of generation in many countries.

Ireland's location at the edge of the Atlantic ensures you have one of the best wind and ocean resources in Europe. With the ambitious target of producing 40% of electricity from renewable sources by 2020, Ireland looks set to take advantage of the falling cost of green energy.

These are fantastic trends and give great hope.

But for THE energy revolution of our lifetimes, the current winner has to be US shale - where, in less than 10 years, oil and gas output have both increased by a factor 10+ and together now produce the energy equivalent of 12 million barrels of oil per day. That roughly matches the total power demand of India, Africa and South America combined!

And that US shale gas is actually **reducing** climate stresses , by displacing coal in the US – and through growing LNG exports , is set to do the same in China, India and Korea – and also reducing urban air pollution there.

Right across solar, wind AND shale - these are all enormous windfalls for the world, capable of transforming billions of lives.

But the world still needs to rapidly accelerate such technological progress to provide much more energy with a much lower carbon footprint.

To me, the latest IPCC report made a compelling case for setting a 1.5 C limit for global average temperature increase by showing that the Paris deal for a 2 C maximum rise would still mean 99% of the world's coral reefs dying. That's surely unthinkable.

But these two great challenges of access to energy and climate change need solving **together**; and they are central to the work of the Energy Institute.

## BREXIT

Speaking of great challenges, I must reluctantly spoil the evening by touching on Brexit - just briefly to mention that the Energy Institute has been working throughout to impress on policy makers the very real concerns of energy professionals.

We survey our members to gauge their views through our annual Energy Barometer and there was no surprise that, in the two surveys since the referendum, red flags have been raised around Brexit.

And I have no doubt significant uncertainty is felt here in Dublin, among other things concerning the land border with Northern Ireland.

The UK Prime Minister has sought to allay fears and has specifically referenced “protecting the single electricity market across Ireland and Northern Ireland and exploring options for the UK’s continued participation in the EU’s internal energy market”.

But the devil is in the detail, and that’s where people from our industry - who know what they’re talking about - need to exert influence.

Membership of the EU is not essential to a fruitful energy relationship with European neighbours – after all Norway provides a fifth of the UK’s gas - but the efficiencies available through trading energy with our European neighbours offer huge benefits to consumers, and resilience to our economy and the environment.

The future of energy is smart. But Brexit is not smart if it means reducing the interaction between markets and the ability to move skills to where they’re needed, limiting the benefits to the consumer in terms of affordability and reliability, and the planet in terms of emissions...

## ENERGY INSTITUTE

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Energy Institute is a professional body that exists for the public good.

We work for corporate members to help develop standards and guidance right across the oil and gas, wind, energy storage, and smart energy management sectors. Knowhow that is increasingly leveraged globally – in 120 countries and counting.

We work for individual members, to support their journey from academic study to professional recognition, and with lifelong learning.

And we engage with a wide variety of external stakeholders to ensure that energy, and its critical role in our world, is better understood, managed and valued.

That is why I'm pleased to see the branch continue to support initiatives such as the Ireland 2050 project, which is empowering people to participate in the discussion about Ireland's energy system.

#### AWARD OF COUNCIL – DAVID TAYLOR

And here I would like to pause to acknowledge the work of one man.

The Award of Council is presented to a select few individuals for their great service to the EI, and recognises those who have made outstanding contributions to branch activities – and tonight I am delighted that we make this award to David Taylor.

David has been pivotal in the development and implementation of the Ireland 2050 initiative, helping users to better understand Ireland's energy system and the policy choices that are faced to make it more sustainable. I tried out the site yesterday and think it's brilliant and thought provoking.

As a past Chairman of the branch, he was responsible for the Institute commissioning research from the Economic and Social Research Institute and for the preparation of advice to Government on the need to revisit and adjust Irish energy policy.

With a career spanning over 40 years, David has played an important role in both the public and private sector.

Appointed as the first CEO of the Government's Sustainable Energy Ireland in 2002, David build its capacity to provide evidence-based policy advice to Government, as well as the provision of information and support to its commercial, regulatory and research stakeholders.

David was also responsible for the creation of the Renewable Energy Information Office, an early public/private partnership which successfully promoted the benefits of wind-power to local authorities, resource owners, and the financial community.

David has represented the Irish Government at the EU and International Energy Agency Committee on research and development, as well as advising the Irish Government on energy issues such as renewable energy policy, emissions tradition and energy efficiency.

As well as all this, David has devoted considerable time and much expertise to the branch - for all this and more please join me in recognising David this evening.

Ladies and gentlemen, at its heart, the EI serves all the ingenious men and women who want to better understand, and contribute to, the extraordinary energy system on which we all depend.

My sincere thanks to everyone in this room who continue to support the Institute in so many ways.