**Minister Naughten: Local Small Businesses Can Save up to 90% on Lighting Costs**

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The Minister for Communications, Climate Change and Environment Denis Naughten is urging small businesses across the country to apply for funding under his Department's Smart Lighting Grant Scheme.

Minister Naughten secured an increase this year to ensure more small businesses could avail of the Government's Smart Lighting fund following a successful pilot scheme in 2017.

The total funding allocation secured in 2018 by Minister Naughten is €3 million, which is a significant increase on the 2017 budget of €550,000.

**"Applications are now open and the increase in funding means the Scheme can be rolled out more widely across the country benefitting even more small businesses this year," stated Minister Naughten.**

**"The purpose of the support Scheme is to help SMEs reduce their energy use and costs. The grant will cover more than one third of the cost of energy efficient lighting upgrades.  There is a further tax incentive under the Accelerated Capital Allowance scheme that is also available and opportunities to negotiate electricity credits with suppliers under the Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme that would bring down the cost of a smart lighting upgrade even further.  This level of payment could help small and medium-sized enterprises save up to 90% on their lighting costs which is a significant saving for any small business. Lighting is the second highest cost for many businesses after staff costs. The maximum grant level is €200,000 but grant payments vary depending on the scale of the project.   These smart lighting upgrades will typically pay for themselves in two to three years," added Minister Naughten.**

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is administering the Scheme and applications are open until May 31st 2018.

The grant is open to small businesses across all sectors including retail, hospitality, tourism, private education, health facilities and manufacturing.  Applications can be submitted by individual businesses or by co-ordinators who group applications and are in a position to apply and deliver lighting upgrades for a number of businesses.

**Minister Naughten added:**

**"There are over 200,000 SMEs operating in Ireland and this scheme aims to support energy efficient lighting upgrades across all SME sectors.  Collectively small businesses account for a significant portion of national, and indeed, global energy demand. The smart lighting grant will significantly help businesses reduce their energy-use, producing real results for the environment, the economy and their own bottom line. Applications must entail a whole building or whole facility which would see lighting upgrades undertaken in all service areas within that building or facility. This could include for example in a retail outlet; the retail sales area, store rooms, toilet facilities and outside car park lighting."**

60 SMEs have already seen the benefits to upgrading to energy efficient, smarter lighting systems.

**Fran Egan, CEO of Hales Freight, carried out lighting upgrades in 2017 with the support of the Smart Lighting Grant.**Speaking about the improvements, Mr. Egan said:

**"We are a Dublin-based freight business that collects, ships and delivers goods, employing 60 people in Ireland and the UK. We replaced over 100 of our old inefficient lights with new highly efficient LED lights in our Dublin warehouse. Our warehouse is now much brighter, which is great for staff and is a safer work environment. Even better again, we are using less energy and have seen significantly reduced electricity bills. This has reduced our operating costs and we are more sustainable in our operations. We received a significant grant and found the process of submitting an application through a co-ordinator really smooth."**