



Sustainability Impact Report

October 2025



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I. Executive Summary

This Report aims to highlight the potential sustainability benefits that can be achieved through regional hub workspaces and centres, with The CUBE – a digital and innovation hub based in Portlaoise – acting as a case study.

The study was undertaken by SIRO, Ireland's 100% fibre broadband network operator, as part of its wider commitment to creating sustainable and thriving communities. SIRO's role in serving communities and its success as a business has always been linked to the progress of the people, businesses, and towns it supports.

With this focus, SIRO in 2016 partnered with Vodafone to establish the Gigabit Hub Initiative (GHI), which has now connected over 25 hubs across Ireland with world-class fibre broadband.



By enabling high-speed, reliable connectivity, SIRO ensures that hubs like The CUBE can operate effectively as drivers of innovation, sustainability, and regional growth. Hub-working as defined in The Future Jobs Ireland Report 2019 is where an employee works from a hub close to or within their local community. This includes co-working, which involves attendance at a co-working space where collaboration and networking is encouraged.

While much of the discourse to date has focused on the economic benefits of these models of working as they have the potential to contribute to rural and regional development, this report explores both the environmental and social impacts of hub working, supported by survey data gathered from The CUBE users.

What sets The CUBE apart is its dedicated sustainability focus. As Ireland's first Low Carbon Centre of Excellence, it combines energy-efficient operations with active community engagement through training, events, and partnerships that help local businesses and individuals adopt more sustainable practices.

The evidence presented in this report positions The CUBE as more than a workspace: it is a model for how regional hubs can strengthen communities, support inclusion, and contribute to Ireland's transition to a low-carbon economy.

II. Introduction

Current Landscape of remote working hubs in Ireland

Ireland has experienced substantial growth in its remote working hub infrastructure in recent years. At present, 387 hubs operate across the country, collectively providing more than 5,000 desks to serve an estimated 10,000 users. This expansion reflects both the shift in working patterns that emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic and a wider strategic effort to revitalise towns and rural areas. Many hubs are located in repurposed buildings, demonstrating how remote working infrastructure can contribute to urban regeneration by bringing new life to derelict or underused spaces.

A coordinated national strategy has underpinned this development. The launch of ConnectedHubs.ie in 2021 created Ireland's first comprehensive national digital hub network. This centralised online platform acts as a gateway to remote working facilities nationwide, allowing individuals and organisations to book desks, offices, and event spaces on both short- and long-term bases. By standardising access and promoting visibility, the platform has strengthened the accessibility of the hub network as a whole.

The expansion of hubs delivers benefits that extend beyond simply providing workspaces. By enabling skilled professionals to remain in rural areas while pursuing employment opportunities, hubs contribute directly to community sustainability.



They also attract mobile professionals who might otherwise cluster in larger cities, helping to balance regional development. These dynamics support the broader objectives of rural resilience, encouraging local economic activity and sustaining vibrant communities outside Ireland's main urban centres.

In addition to these social and economic benefits, hubs offer clear environmental and quality-of-life advantages. The reduction in long-distance commuting lowers transport emissions, while shorter journeys save time and allow workers to achieve a better work-life balance. Together, these outcomes highlight the role of remote working hubs not only as a response to shifting work practices but also as a key component of Ireland's wider sustainability and regional development strategy.

SIRO-Vodafone Gigabit Hub Initiative

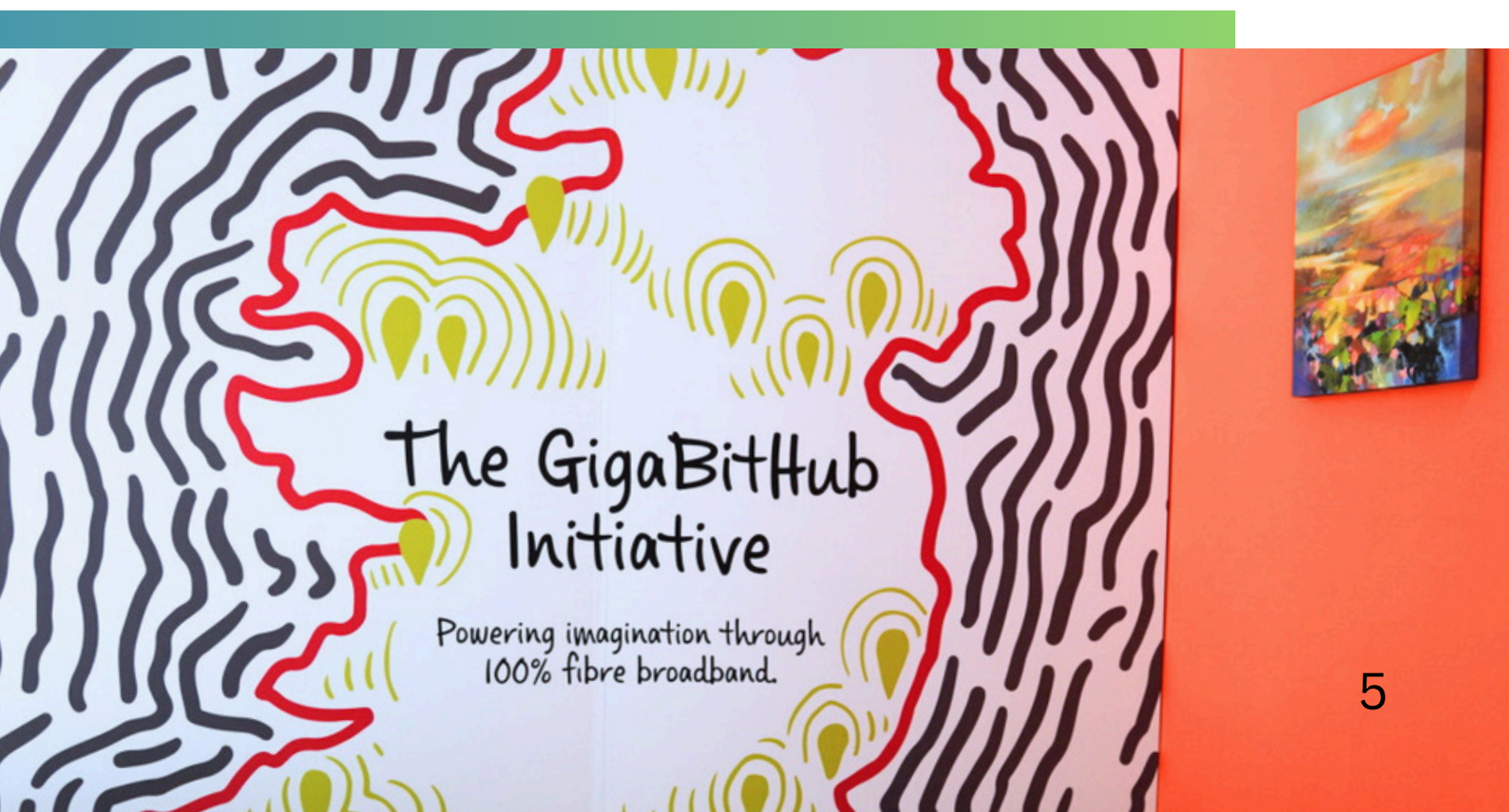
The SIRO-Vodafone Gigabit Hub Initiative is a programme designed to bring world-class broadband connectivity to enterprise hubs across Ireland. Launched in 2016 at the Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen, it was created on the belief that fast, reliable broadband is essential for hubs to thrive.

Through the initiative, participating hubs are connected, at no cost, to SIRO's 100% fibre network and receive two years of complimentary gigabit broadband service, along with dedicated technical support. This model ensures hubs not only have best-in-class connectivity but also the tools and expertise to support remote workers, start-ups, and growing businesses.

Since its inception, the initiative has expanded to 25 hubs nationwide, supporting the creation of over 650 jobs. Today, Gigabit Hubs host more than 1,000 desks used by a wide mix of companies, from innovative start-ups to established businesses.

The impact extends beyond connectivity. By enabling hubs to offer seamless digital infrastructure, the initiative helps to foster innovation, attract investment, and strengthen local economies, ensuring businesses in regional Ireland can compete on a global stage.

Notable hubs include The Mill in Drogheda, The CUBE in Portlaoise, both PORTERSHED and CREW in Galway, and the pioneering Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen, each serving as a catalyst for enterprise and community growth in their regions.



The CUBE

The focus of this study will be The CUBE, Portlaoise. The CUBE is a Midlands-based digital and innovation hub focused on facilitating economic growth, innovation and decarbonisation. With Portlaoise designated as Ireland's first 'Low Carbon Town', The CUBE contributes towards the achievement of this goal while also supporting the creation of local jobs and opportunities in the area. The building itself once laid derelict in the heart of Portlaoise's cultural district but has now been transformed into a visible beacon of hope for regeneration in the local area. Spanning 10,000 square feet The CUBE provides state of the art facilities for a number of businesses, its members and the wider community. Opened in 2023, the facility is the first of its kind within the region and has the potential to become a benchmark for similar initiatives in Ireland and internationally.

The CUBE offers space for businesses, most notably SMEs to set up a central base or to rent space on a short-term basis. The CUBE offers bespoke consultancy services and mentorship opportunities for businesses that are ready to embrace sustainability across several areas including greenhouse gas (GHG) measurement, accessing available grants for renewable projects, energy saving measures, waste management consulting, resource use and circular economy consulting. In addition to this they offer general business consultancy and advice to ensure long term success and viability of the businesses that it supports.



As a member of the SIRO-Vodafone Gigabit Hub Initiative, The CUBE benefits from world-class fibre broadband connectivity, ensuring that local businesses and individuals can compete on a global stage. Its mission extends beyond connectivity, however, with a clear emphasis on sustainability, community engagement, and regional regeneration.

Methodology

The findings presented in this report are informed by a survey carried out with members of The CUBE in Portlaoise. The survey was designed to capture both the environmental and social impacts of hub working, with a total of 23 questions divided across three thematic areas: commuting and environmental impact, social inclusion and employment, and general sustainability engagement.

In total, half of hub users responded to the survey, representing a 50% participation rate. While the sample size is modest, the findings provide a credible snapshot of the CUBE's role in supporting sustainable work practices and regional development and establish a baseline for future measurement.

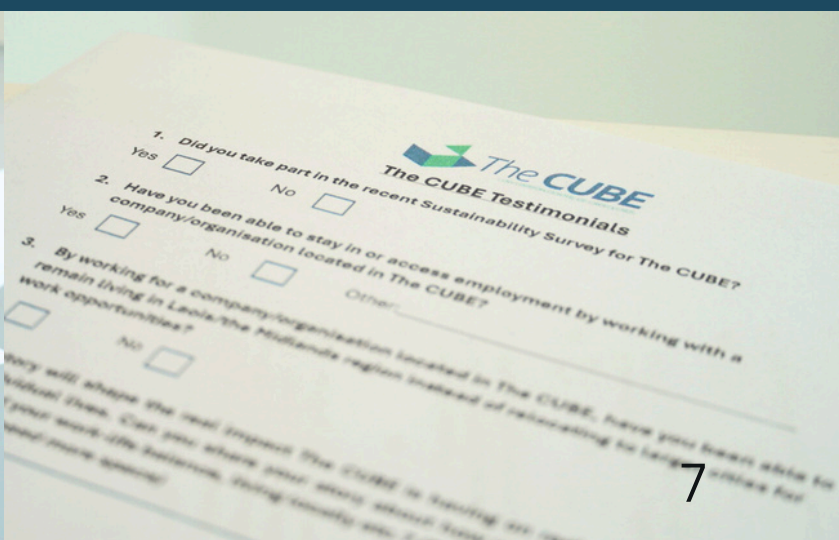
Environmental Impact of The CUBE:

To calculate emissions associated with commuting, respondents were asked to provide information on their mode of transport, the distance travelled to the hub, and the frequency of their commute.

This data provides a basis for estimating transport-related greenhouse gas emissions, as well as assessing the potential avoided emissions compared with longer commutes to centralised offices.

Social Impact of The CUBE:

The second section of the survey sought to assess the social impacts of hub working, particularly in relation to access and retention in employment, opportunities for upskilling, and the ability to remain living in the Midlands. This section is complemented by qualitative responses and personal testimonials from hub users, which provide valuable context and illustrate the lived experiences behind the quantitative data.



III. Environmental Sustainability at The CUBE

Remote working, popularised after the Covid-19 pandemic, can significantly reduce CO₂ and NO₂ emissions associated with commuting to an office or other centralised workplace, as workers do not need to commute. This has an additional environmental benefit of reducing road level pollution caused by traffic congestion during peak commuting hours. Traditional office spaces are often associated with high energy usage including lighting, heating, cooling and running office devices. The shift in preferences towards remote working may also reduce the infrastructure demand for centralised office spaces, which can reduce emissions associated with construction, building maintenance and operational energy demands.

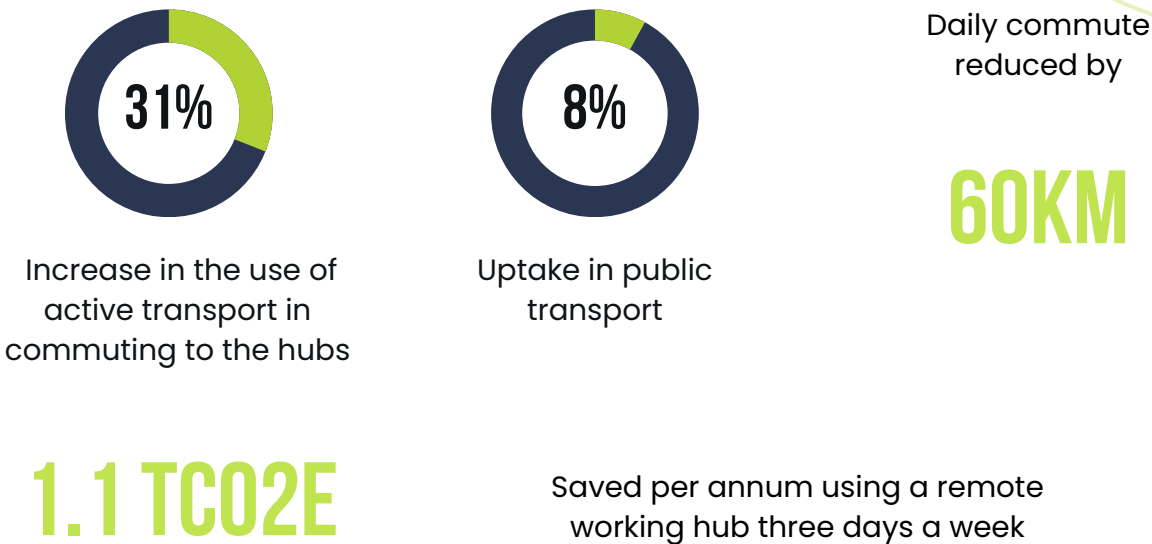
However remote working is not without some sustainability concerns, shifting work from office spaces to home may increase residential energy consumption as there will be a large number of dispersed workers working remotely from multiple locations consuming their own energy.

Regional remote working hubs present a unique opportunity to achieve the most sustainable way of working. Hub working has the potential to reap the sustainability benefits of remote working and office working. There are opportunities to limit emissions associated with commuting as users of these hubs are likely commute shorter distances and avoid longer commutes to city centre offices and workspaces.

This may also facilitate increased uptake of public transport and active transport options such as cycling. They also provide a structure where multiple businesses and professionals can operate from one building resulting in energy savings compared with other working alternatives.



Existing research within an Irish context has found evidence of the sustainability benefits of hub working. A 2022 study conducted on a number of remote working hubs in the greater Dublin area and in bordering counties found the following:



Building Energy Consumption

The built environment comprises all residential, public and commercial sector buildings, it accounts for 11.1% of overall GHG emissions in Ireland according to the Climate Action Plan (2025). Operational emissions refer to the emissions associated with use of these buildings, this includes emissions from electricity, heating, maintenance and other sources. In Portlaoise the carbon footprint associated with providing electricity and heat to business offices and industrial buildings equates to 32, 652 TCO₂ (LCAP, 24).

There is evidence to show that energy efficiency of office buildings in Ireland has been increasing over time. The CSO reports that from 2015 to 2023 the mean electricity consumption of office buildings has decreased by 7802 kilowatt hours (kWh). This may be for a number of reasons including retrofitting of buildings to implement more energy efficient designs and technologies.

Table 2A Mean Electricity Consumption by Year and Type of Premises 2023					
Year	Mean kilowatt hours				
	Community/ Day Centre	Offices	Primary Health Care	Restaurant/ Public House	Retail
2015	23,762	35,409	15,080	45,639	33,625
2016	23,659	35,724	15,423	44,867	33,946
2017	22,727	34,638	16,054	44,549	33,514
2018	23,910	35,582	17,935	45,730	34,153
2019	22,025	33,573	17,399	45,496	33,004
2020	20,022	30,424	17,836	37,326	30,846
2021	21,250	27,856	19,335	35,519	31,920
2022	20,389	28,354	20,440	42,749	34,029
2023	19,204	27,607	19,937	42,051	33,966

Source: CSO Non-Domestic Electricity Consumption by Building and Energy Ratings 2023

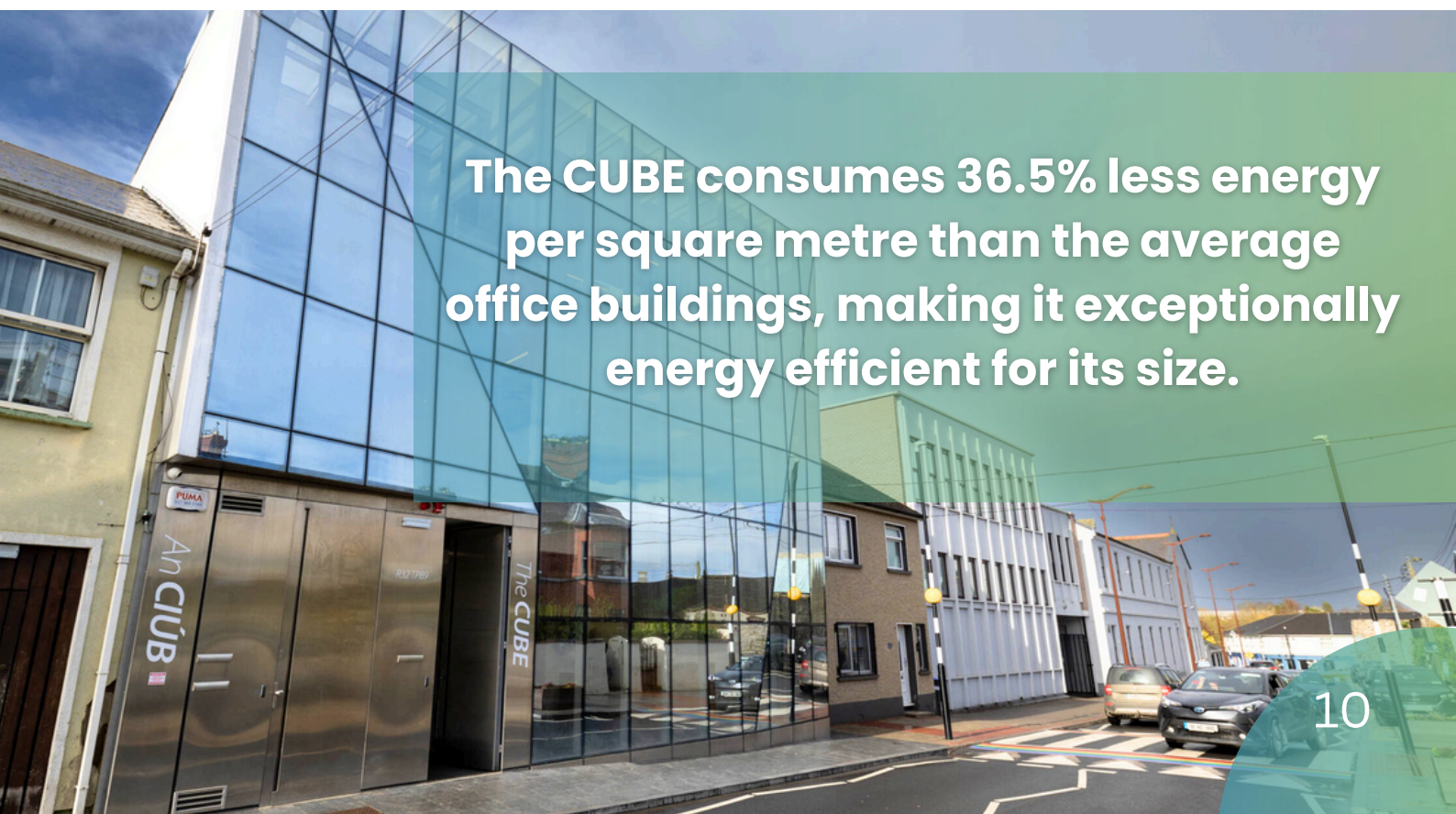
In 2024 the Cube consumed 27,141 kWh of energy, this places them in line with average office consumption of 27,607 kWh. However, when we compare this level of consumption with floor space we see clear sustainability gains. The CUBE's floorspace spans 10,000 square feet (929 square metres), this equates to 2.71 kWh of energy consumed per square foot or 29.2 kWh per square metre.

The Central Statistics Office has calculated the mean electricity consumption per square metre for an office building to be 80 kWh (2023). This means that the square metre energy consumption of The CUBE is 36.5% lower than this mean figure. The CUBE has implemented energy saving technologies including LED lighting throughout the building as well as sensor light switches. This is compounded when we also consider that multiple businesses operate from this office location, at any one time roughly 5 or 6 businesses may operate from The CUBE. There can translate to further energy efficiencies when compared with traditional office spaces where typically one business may own or lease their own building.

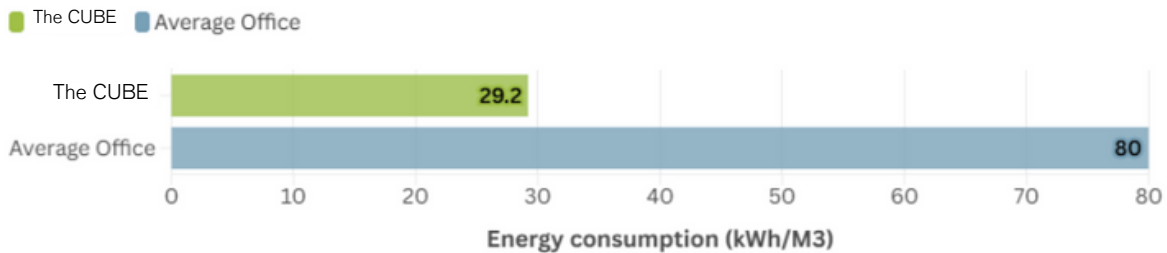
Table 5A Mean Electricity Consumption per square metre by Year and Type of Premises 2023

Year	Mean kilowatt hours per square metre				
	Community/ Day Centre	Offices	Primary Health Care	Restaurant/ Public House	Retail
2015	84	102	87	204	151
2016	86	101	82	205	151
2017	82	99	84	201	146
2018	85	101	90	205	149
2019	78	96	82	207	143
2020	71	87	80	175	133
2021	79	80	75	166	134
2022	73	82	78	196	140
2023	68	80	76	195	138

Source: CSO Non-Domestic Electricity Consumption by Building and Energy Ratings 2023



Energy Efficiency per Square Metre



Hybrid working structures may present challenges for businesses in managing energy consumption. There may be days with reduced numbers of staff in the building, but electricity will still be required to power the lights, HVAC systems and other electronic devices across the whole office. Hub working presents a more sustainable working structure to overcome these challenges as multiple businesses and individuals can operate from the one space, this can reduce the electricity consumption per user of the hub. Maximising the number of companies and workers in office spaces can present effective decarbonisation pathways for this sector. CAP25 notes that the commercial building sector must reduce emissions by 2.9% per annum to stay within the 2025 sectoral emissions ceiling.

In addition to these factors, it is worth noting that the building which The CUBE occupies was previously derelict. Embodied emissions from buildings which include those from construction materials and processes are captured within industrial emissions under the climate action plan. Utilising derelict buildings can reduce embodied emissions of a building compared with new buildings.

An overview of Commuting in Ireland

Transport represents a growing share of Ireland's GHG inventory, transport emissions account for roughly a fifth of total emissions. These emissions have increased over time, according to the EPA emissions from this sector have increased by 129.4% between 1990 and 2023.

Ireland's Climate Action Plan stipulates that emissions associated with transport must decrease by 50% by 2030 compared with the 2018 baseline, this is a legally binding target. Progress in this area is currently at a plateau, CAP25 revealed that emissions in this sector have actually increased by 0.3%. If Ireland is to remain within the carbon budget of this sector drastic policy action and behavioural change will be required to address these emissions.

Commuting accounts for a significant proportion of these emissions. There is no exact figure, however the Department of Transport have calculated that road transport constitutes 95% of all transport emissions and passenger cars are responsible for 50% of all transport emissions. It is likely that a significant portion of all commuting emissions will lie between these figures as commuting by car accounts for 63% of all commutes.

According to the last census there are over 3.2 million people commuting to a place of work or study, travel by car was the most popular mode of transport. The average distance of commutes has also been increasing with the average distance travelled being 16.8km. This has also translated into increased duration of commutes, with the average rising from 26.6 minutes in 2011 to 29.1 minutes in 2022.

Commuting in County Laois – Key Stats

The average commute length in Laois is

25.3km

highest of any county

32.3 mins

average commute duration

(5th highest in Ireland)



17.2%

of Portlaoise commuters

spend over

1 hour

travelling to work

8.3%

of Laois workers travel to **Dublin City** & suburbs for work



Other popular work destinations:

Carlow and Kildare

42%



of Laois workforce travel **outside the county** for employment*



*Research commissioned by Laois County Council in 2018. There will be an update on this research in October 2025 to determine the demographics and key employment sectors of workers with the aim of redeploying skills into the local area.



Commuting insights at The CUBE

We surveyed users of The CUBE to determine what the environmental footprint of these commutes are and to gain other commuting insights to determine how their journey compares to averages for Laois and against their previous commutes from before they began working from The CUBE.

We asked users the following questions:

- **How often do you commute to The CUBE?**
- **How far is your journey to The CUBE (one way)?**
- **What mode of transport do you use to commute to the hub?**

We also asked for information relating to their previous commute before working from The CUBE to estimate the emissions of their previous commute.

Our hypotheses were as follows:

H0: Due to the regional location of The CUBE, users will have a shorter commute than the county average.

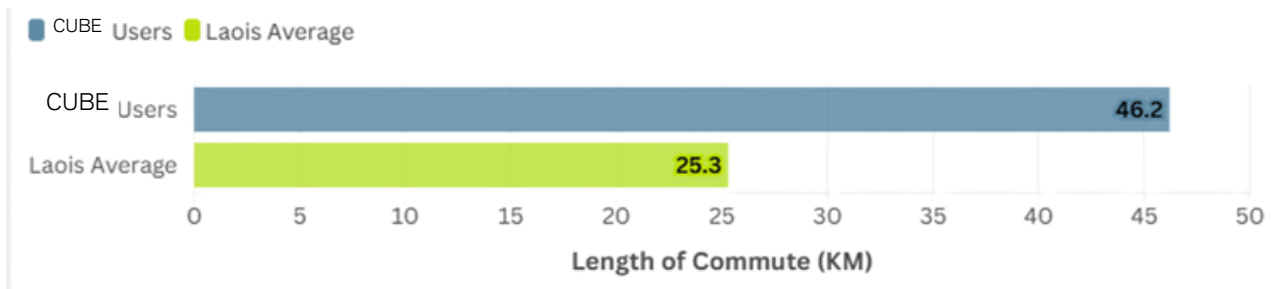
H1: Commuting emissions associated with travel to the hub will be lower than that of previous commutes.

The survey was circulated among users of the hub; it received a 50% response rate.

We calculated emissions associated with the commute of users by calculating the total distance travelled in a week by multiplying the distance travelled daily by the frequency of their travel. We then estimated what this would be on an annual basis, we assumed that the average worker would commute to work 46 weeks of the year, taking into consideration four weeks of annual leave, one week of public holidays and one week of sick leave.

We then multiplied the total yearly distance by an emission factor that correlated with their mode of transportation. We then repeated this process for their previous commute to compare emissions before and after hub working.

Analysis of the results did not indicate any evidence of avoided emissions or lower commuting distances; in fact, the opposite was true. This may be as some users were working entirely by remote means before using The CUBE, in addition to this as several businesses operate from The CUBE as a central office location it is likely that there may be individuals travelling from different counties.



Despite overall trends indicating that the average commute has increased, some individual users have reported significant decreases in their commutes. One user noted that they previously had a daily total commute of four hours travelling to and from Dublin. They have said that since moving to The CUBE their commute has significantly lessened, and this has allowed them to maintain a greater work life balance.

While regional hub working may have the potential to reduce commuting emissions, it risks limiting its impact without adequate public transport networks that align with people's routines. In our survey, 100% of respondents relied on a car to commute to The CUBE. However, there was evidence to suggest that users may be willing to change their commuting behaviours, but feel the current public transport system in the area does not enable them to do so.

The main reasons provided for not utilising public transport are outlined below:



A 2022 study undertaken by the Centre for Transport Research, Department of Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering and Trinity College Dublin looked into the impacts of hub working on travel patterns in the greater Dublin area and neighbouring counties. They found that this working pattern facilitated a greater uptake of public transport, with 39% of workers opting for it.

While regional hub working may have the potential to reduce commuting emissions, it may be limited without adequate public transport networks which suit people and their routines. Incentivisation of public transport has been made possible through the use of remote hub working, but the question now is how we can ensure these benefits are not exclusive to Dublin and its surrounding areas, and can be diffused throughout Ireland?

In Portlaoise emissions from transport account for 39% of all sector emissions, this drops to 25% for County Laois as a whole (LCAP, 24). One of the strategic goals of the Laois Climate Action plan is to use active travel, environmental awareness and other programmes to facilitate more climate friendly options for individuals.

Strategic Goal D: Through Active Travel, Environmental Awareness, and other programmes, to enhance opportunities for individuals to choose the better, climate friendly, options.

Objectives

D1	To make it more attractive or easier for individuals and groups to choose the more climate friendly options.
D2	To upgrade public infrastructure to allow for more climate friendly options.
D3	To continue, through a combination of persuasion and active measures, to enforce environmental legislation in the interests of the community as whole.
D4	To incorporate climate related criteria within our internal assessment procedures.
D5	To work with communities to develop locally based and community driven behavioural change actions.

As of February 2025, two bus services have been launched in Portlaoise with the aim of increasing connectivity, these buses run every 30 minutes. Another bus service connecting Portlaoise and Roscrea was also launched in 2025 as part of the National Transport Authority's Connecting Rural Ireland Mobility Plan. The plan, now in its third phase, has seen a steady increase in use of rural services since the plan was implemented. Across 2024 the NTA added over 120,000 additional weekly vehicle kilometres to the public transport network.

The CUBE is also conveniently located beside the train station for the advantage of commuters who are travelling further distances or from other counties. Active transport has also received great focus as part of climate initiatives in the town. A bike library with upcycled bikes has been established in the town park, electric bikes have been introduced, safe bike lanes have been incorporated within road infrastructure.

While there are increasing options for public transport in the area, users of the hub still cite lack of suitable routes as an inhibiting factor. The bus routes only cover the town itself and do not extend into surrounding areas. Commuters from beyond the town's borders will have no additional benefit from this route in its current format. Instead, a park and ride service may be beneficial to provide workers with an option to utilise the bus route for a portion of their journey.

This would further decrease congestion in the town centre; this will not only reduce pollution at exhaust level but will also contribute to safer streets for the many schools in the area that are encouraging children to cycle to school. Cost of public transport was also cited as an inhibiting factor, given Portlaoise's status as Ireland's first low carbon town, planners may wish to trial fare reductions and subsidies to incentivise greater uptake. For example, bus fares may be reduced during normal working and school hours to the benefit of workers and students.

The CUBE GHG Inventory 2024

As part of this project The CUBE's GHG inventory across scope 1 and 2 emissions were also quantified for the first time. A bespoke template for calculation has also been developed to allow The CUBE to annually measure their environmental footprint across these scopes to track and benchmark performance over time and against targets.

Scope 1 Emissions

The CUBE generates stationary combustion emissions in scope 1. They have a natural gas burner which is used to heat the building as part of a hybrid heating system which also utilises heat pumps to ensure optimum efficiency. The following calculation was performed to calculate associated emissions.

$$E = (Q * EF) / 1000$$

Where:

E= emissions (TCO₂e), Q= quantity of fuel used per annum, EF= emission factor (kgCO₂e/M³ of natural gas)

In 2024 The CUBE's scope 1 emissions from stationary combustion totalled **5.19 TCO₂e**.



Scope 2 Emissions

These are emissions associated with purchased electricity. Emissions were calculated using both the market-based and location-based methods.

Consumption data for the period was taken from The CUBE's electricity bills for 2024. In the location-based method the All-Ireland Average Grid Mix for 2024 was applied as the emission factor. In the market-based method a supplier specific emission factor was applied, this information was found in their electricity bills. In this instance the market-based emission factor exceeded the all-Ireland Average Grid Mix. The following calculation was performed to calculate associated emissions.

$$E = (Q * EF) / 1000$$

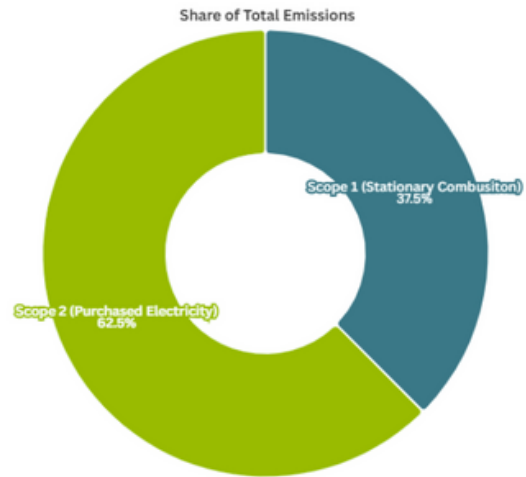
Where:

E = Scope 2 emissions (tCO₂e), Q = Quantity of purchased electricity (kWh), EF = Scope 2 emission factor for purchased electricity (kgCO₂e/kWh).

In 2024 market-based scope 2 emissions were **8.65 TCO₂e** and location-based emissions were **6.05 TCO₂e**. The market-based figure is a more accurate reflection of actual emissions as it considers the fuel mix of their energy provider.

The CUBE has transitioned to a renewable energy tariff with an alternative provider which will result in scope 2 emission reductions from 2025.

Emission Profile 2024

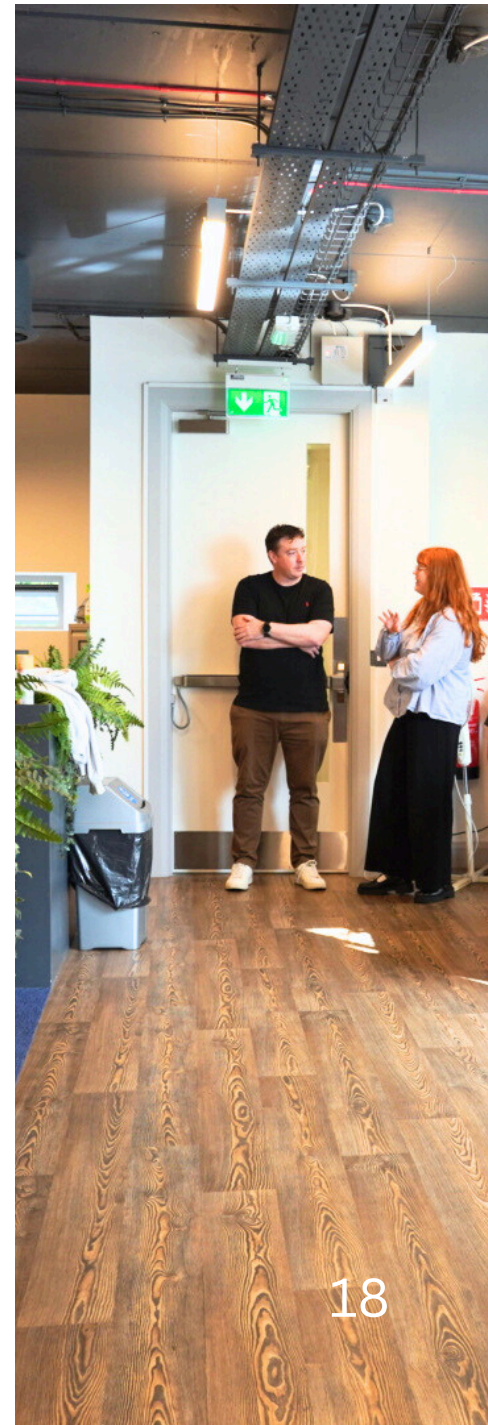


IV. Social Sustainability

Regional hubs are not only enablers of more sustainable working practices but also catalysts for greater social inclusion and regional development. Access to high-quality workspace locally can help individuals overcome barriers to employment, particularly for those who may otherwise face challenges in commuting long distances or relocating to larger urban centres. In this way, hubs contribute to sustaining population levels in regional areas, supporting balanced economic growth across the country.

Access to employment and regional development in the Midlands

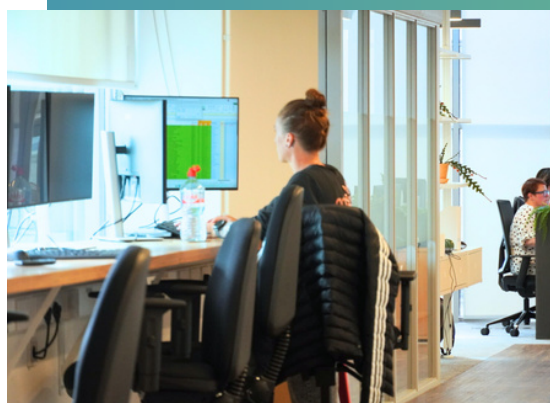
Our survey findings demonstrate the important role The CUBE plays in enabling greater inclusion, accessibility to employment, and improved quality of life for those living and working in the Midlands. Access to a regional hub not only reduces commuting times but also provides opportunities for individuals and businesses to remain embedded in their local communities while still accessing professional facilities and career opportunities.



When asked whether working from a regional hub such as The CUBE has helped them remain living in the Midlands, 40% of respondents indicated that it had. For many, this represents a significant shift away from the trend of relocating to larger urban centres in search of employment, instead allowing them to stay connected to their home region, families, and local networks. Similarly, 26% of participants reported that access to The CUBE had directly enabled them to access or remain in employment—highlighting its value as a driver of workforce participation and regional retention. For some individuals, particularly those balancing family and caregiving responsibilities, the availability of a local hub has been transformative. Indeed, one-third of respondents noted that before accessing The CUBE, they had previously been required to reduce hours, change jobs, or leave the workforce entirely due to these pressures.

The impact of the hub is also evident in terms of work-life balance. Over half of respondents (53%) stated that working from The CUBE had allowed them to maintain a better balance between professional and personal responsibilities. This was consistently reinforced through the qualitative responses, which offered rich insights into the lived experience of hub users.

Lynda Dowling of O'Mahony Safety Solutions explained that the hub's facilities have enabled her team to deliver services locally, avoiding the need for relocation or extensive travel. By basing operations in Portlaoise, the company has been able to sustain its business while also contributing to the local economy and reducing carbon emissions. She emphasised that The CUBE plays a key role in fostering sustainability “environmentally, socially, and economically,” while also supporting business growth.



The CUBE: Driving Regional Impact



Staying Local

40% of respondents said The CUBE helped them remain living in the Midlands.



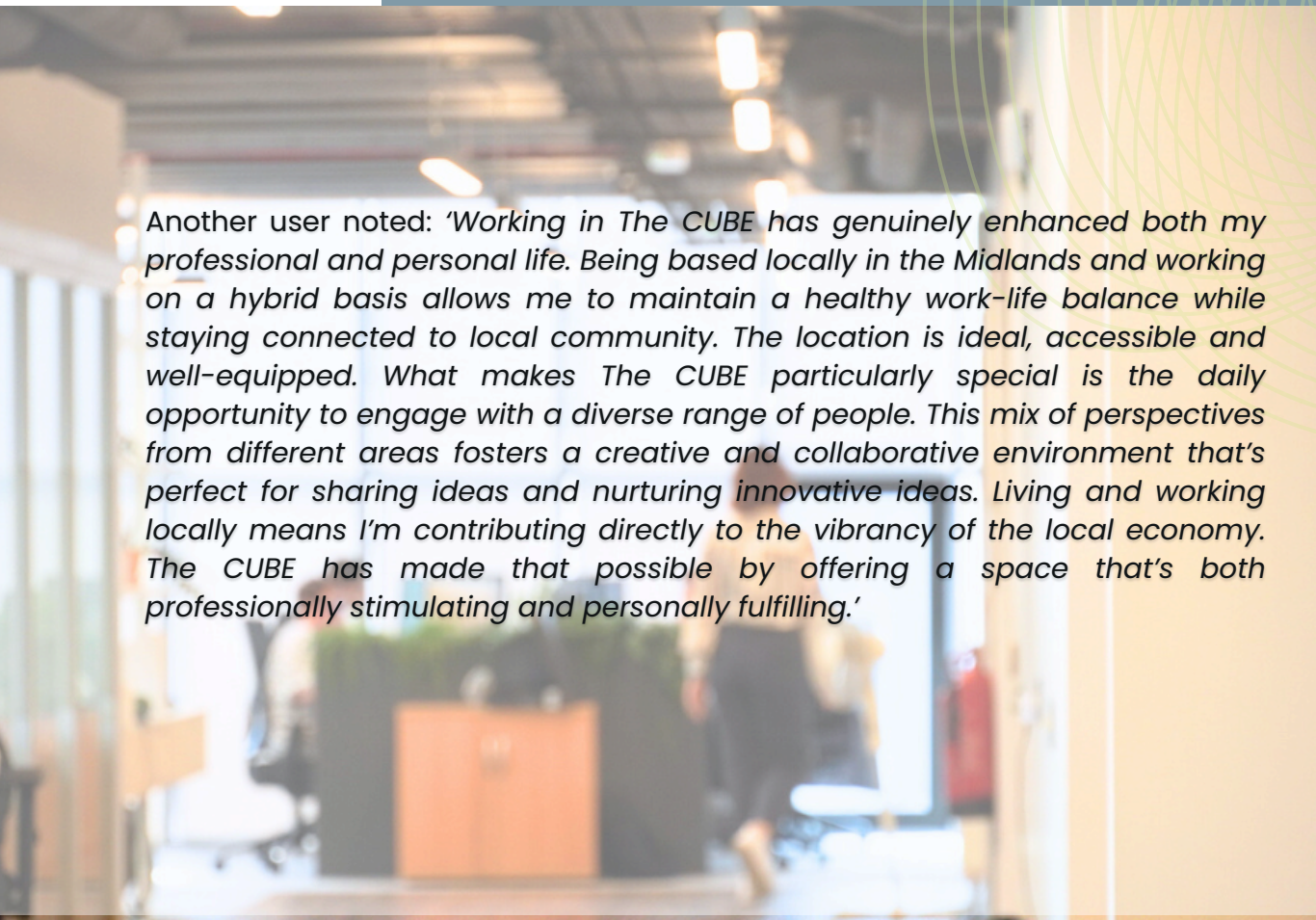
Employment Access

26% reported that The CUBE directly enabled them to access or stay in employment.



Caregiving Support

33% had previously reduced hours, changed jobs, or left the workforce due to caregiving pressures.



Another user noted: *'Working in The CUBE has genuinely enhanced both my professional and personal life. Being based locally in the Midlands and working on a hybrid basis allows me to maintain a healthy work-life balance while staying connected to local community. The location is ideal, accessible and well-equipped. What makes The CUBE particularly special is the daily opportunity to engage with a diverse range of people. This mix of perspectives from different areas fosters a creative and collaborative environment that's perfect for sharing ideas and nurturing innovative ideas. Living and working locally means I'm contributing directly to the vibrancy of the local economy. The CUBE has made that possible by offering a space that's both professionally stimulating and personally fulfilling.'*

Colin McGrath of QA Leads shared a personal perspective on the dramatic difference working locally has made to his daily life. Previously commuting to Dublin, he described the strain of spending "three to four hours daily minimum travelling to get to work" and how this negatively affected his home life. Transitioning to work at The CUBE not only eliminated this burden but also allowed him to continue working for an employer he values, with a much healthier work-life balance.





Others spoke to the benefit of proximity to both family and community. **Seamus Delaney of Prospect Base** highlighted how being just three miles from the office allows him to fully engage in family life, collecting his children from school and attending training sessions in the evenings. His company also adopted flexible working patterns, such as early starts and Friday half-days, which are made possible by operating locally. Another respondent, who chose to remain anonymous, emphasised that working in Portlaoise meant always being “ten minutes away by car from home,” which in turn afforded more time with family.

Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that the hub is much more than a workplace. It is an enabler of regional development, ensuring that individuals and companies can thrive within the Midlands rather than feeling compelled to relocate to larger cities. The survey results and personal stories point to tangible social benefits: improved access to employment, stronger family and community ties, reduced stress and commuting times, and a healthier work-life balance. By addressing barriers to employment and supporting those with caregiving responsibilities, The CUBE also contributes to greater social inclusion. In doing so, it strengthens not only the lives of individual users but also the long-term sustainability and vibrancy of the region as a whole.

Hubs in the Community: Wider Local Benefits

Remote working hubs also function as important community anchors, providing spaces not only for professional activity but also for broader engagement with local stakeholders. The CUBE has established itself as a regional resource by hosting events that bring together individuals, businesses, and public bodies to share knowledge and access practical supports.

One dimension of this engagement has been its collaboration with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) in delivering pop-up energy retrofit clinics. These sessions provide tailored advice to homeowners, business owners, farmers, and community groups on retrofitting options and grant availability, helping to translate national sustainability schemes into accessible, localised action.

The hub also supports the business community through workshops and roadshows designed to build organisational capacity around sustainability. These events have offered practical guidance to both SMEs and larger firms on embedding sustainability into their operations, with a particular focus on environmental, social and governance objectives.

Alongside these structured supports, hubs such as The CUBE also act as convening spaces for regional networking, which facilitate collaboration and idea exchange among businesses, agencies, and community organisations, highlighting the role of hubs in fostering innovation and partnership at the local level.

Through these activities, remote working hubs extend their impact beyond the provision of workspace. They contribute to community development by creating opportunities for knowledge sharing, capacity building, and collaboration, thereby embedding themselves more deeply in the social and economic fabric of the regions they serve.



V. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this report demonstrate that regional hub working, as illustrated through the case study of The CUBE, delivers measurable sustainability benefits that align with both local and national climate objectives. With adequate support, investment, and reliable broadband connectivity, these benefits can be replicated across Ireland's growing network of remote working hubs.

As Ireland's first Low Carbon Centre of Excellence, The CUBE contributes directly to the objectives of the Laois Climate Action Plan and to Portlaoise's role as Ireland's first low-carbon town. Beyond the local level, the hub is advancing progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the areas of decent work, innovation, sustainable communities, and climate action.

Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth

The CUBE has provided an opportunity to bring green jobs to the midlands. This has provided individuals with the opportunity to remain living or relocate to the midlands; this is consistent with rural and regional development ensuring there are opportunities for employment outside of Ireland's major cities. Direct employment supported by The CUBE will also indirectly support other employment in the town, users of the hub spend money in cafes and local businesses stimulating economic growth and prosperity across the town.

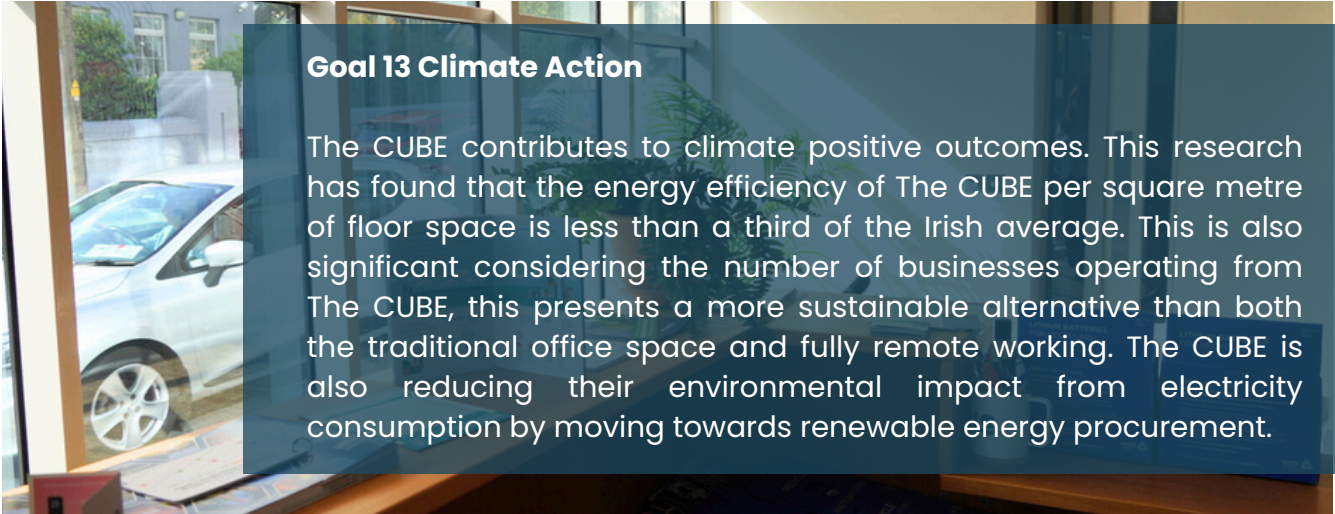
Goal 9 Industry Innovation and Infrastructure

The CUBE is an innovative solution to dereliction; the once abandoned building has been transformed into a state-of-the-art modern working facility for companies and individuals who wish to lease access to their meeting rooms and offices. Many of the businesses who are operating from the hub operate within the sustainability sphere, bringing these businesses under the one roof has resulted in opportunities for them to enhance their professional network and to collaborate and innovate with like-minded organisations. The CUBE also supports industry through the sustainable business supports including consultancy that it offers, especially for SMEs and micro-enterprises.



Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities

The CUBE is not just a place of work; it is also an important community amenity. The CUBE has provided a space for communities to receive supports and resources for implementing sustainable practices in their own lives including supports for green homes and repair shops to contribute towards a circular economy.



Goal 13 Climate Action

The CUBE contributes to climate positive outcomes. This research has found that the energy efficiency of The CUBE per square metre of floor space is less than a third of the Irish average. This is also significant considering the number of businesses operating from The CUBE, this presents a more sustainable alternative than both the traditional office space and fully remote working. The CUBE is also reducing their environmental impact from electricity consumption by moving towards renewable energy procurement.

While the research confirms the sustainability benefits of The CUBE, it also highlights opportunities for further progress. Commuting emissions remain a challenge, with most hub users still reliant on private cars due to limited public transport availability. Although new bus routes have been introduced, further action is required to increase uptake. Engagement with workers and local residents will be essential to evaluate the effectiveness of new transport links, and additional measures such as park-and-ride services could help to reduce car dependency.

Looking ahead, The CUBE could also strengthen its role as a living example for sustainable work models by continuing to measure commuting-related emissions over time, expanding community outreach on sustainable mobility in collaboration with local authorities, and showcasing more user stories to highlight the social benefits of hub working, particularly for women and caregivers. At the same time, it can build on its achievements in energy efficiency and renewable energy, setting a benchmark for other hubs across Ireland.

The case of The CUBE demonstrates how regional hubs can act as catalysts for Ireland's transition to a low-carbon, regionally balanced economy. By replicating and scaling these successes, hubs across Ireland can contribute meaningfully to national climate goals and regional development strategies.

VI. References

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