

Obituary: Dr Eddie O'Connor

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IJGlobal is saddened to report that Eddie O'Connor – one of the leading lights of the global renewable energy community and a character of considerable renown – has passed.

It is rare these days to be able to celebrate a true individual in a world that demands a more bland – for the want of a better word – approach to business... but that wasn't Eddie. He was a character of the old school, and much loved for that.

Eddie was a pioneer in the renewable energy space. Back in 2004 when he was chief executive of Airtricity, he took part in a [Q&A on IJGlobal](#) and his wisdom was as in tune with the market then as it was to the end.

His career was impressive. From the early days in Ireland of working at ESB then digging Bord na Mona out of a hole, Eddie founded Airtricity in 1998 and [sold it in 2008](#) to E.on and SSE for €1.8 billion.

This was followed promptly by the creation of [Mainstream Renewable Energy](#) where he played a key role in its evolution into an international player in the sector.



More recently, Eddie in 2017 formed SuperNode – the Dublin-headquartered electric power transmission, control and distribution company – and assumed the role of executive chair of the board in June 2021.

Beyond his many industry accolades, Eddie was a skilled communicator and writer. His first book is “A Dangerous Visionary”, but more recently he penned “Supergrid – Super Solution: The key to solving the energy crisis and decarbonising Europe”.

This latest book is a manual for how to deploy a supergrid that, he argues, is the best and only way to decarbonise Europe using renewable energy, enabled by superconducting cables.

John Fitzgerald, SuperNode chief executive, said: “It is with great sadness that SuperNode announces that its founder and chairman, Dr Eddie O'Connor, has passed away after a brief illness at the age of 76.

“Our thoughts are firstly with his family: his wife Hildegard; his children Robert and Lesley; his daughter-in-law and son-in-law, Polly and Stewart; his beloved grandchildren and wider family.

“Our commiserations also to Eddie's wide circle of friends and colleagues. A special mention must be made also to his

life-long friend and personal assistant Marian Shanahan.”

Fitzgerald added: “Eddie was a rare and amazing person with great intelligence, vision, vitality, courage and resolve. He is known as one of Ireland’s greatest entrepreneurs, leading the development of the global wind industry as founder of Irish companies Airtricity, Mainstream Renewable Power and SuperNode.

“But calling Eddie an entrepreneur does not quite suffice, he was a swashbuckling pioneer and an irrepressible visionary, who inspired others to believe that change could happen and gave them confidence that they could make it happen.

“Eddie spotted opportunities and trends many years before anyone else and was determined to shape developments by being the first mover.

“In 1992, he built Ireland’s first commercial wind farm in Bellacorick, as Bord na Móna chief executive.

“He founded Airtricity, in 1996 and broke the Irish electricity monopoly by selling wind power 10% cheaper than the incumbent and built Ireland’s first offshore wind farm in 2004.

“Under Eddie's guidance, Airtricity rapidly expanded, becoming a global leader in renewable energy development.

“His foresight and determination propelled the company to the forefront of the wind energy revolution, with projects spanning the globe.

“His commitment to clean energy solutions was unwavering, and he relentlessly advocated for a transition away from fossil fuels toward renewable sources.”

The energy sector is less for your passing and those who knew you were lucky to have rubbed shoulders.

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