

To the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

I am a lecturer in Philosophy and an LLB student. Thank you for this opportunity to give my input to the Territorial Plan for the EU funded Just Transition. I have read the Plan with interest, and spent some time trying to assess how it meets the requirements of the underlying Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 establishing the Just Transition Fund.

I absolutely applaud and support the efforts at a transition away from fossil fuels in the region, and I know that an awful lot of work goes into these documents, and I really do intend my submission to be constructive. But, with all due respect, the plan as it stands will achieve very little. You, the person reading this submission, must recognise that.

There is no vision or ambition whatsoever. This Plan is dedicated to shoring up social problems by some aids and supports, but this transition in the Midlands is a chance to do some really innovative things, if we can have the courage to try.

I will give just three simple examples of programmes which this Transition Fund could be used toward, or which the Midlands Transition as a project could embrace, with auxiliary help from this Fund.

1 We should put in place free child care in County Longford. This would have three certain benefits. A) It would help with educational attainment long-term. B) It would be a major step toward gender equality, allowing women into the workforce. C) And it would make the county an immediately attractive location for young families, this in itself boosting the economy. This would be a chance to pilot a programme that could significantly change the country for the better if it were rolled out nationwide.

2 We should rewild whole very large tracts of the midlands. Rewet the bogs and let nature take its course. This would be another really significant programme that the midlands would lead the way in, and would be a major positive investment in the region and in the country in the long term.

3 We should give ownership of energy-generating assets to local communities. It would be a source of income, ending the need for continued funding to the region. And, as with the previous two programmes, it would be a major programme, worthy of international attention.

These three steps alone would change the Midlands from a problem to be somehow ameliorated as best we can into a national source of pride, and an internationally recognised site of social, natural and economic innovation.

Let's not let a good crisis go to waste. Instead of needing to convince the EU that we are going to spend their money soberly, let's offer them programmes that they will really want to support.

Thank you for your time.

Yours,