

Mid Term Review of the OREDP

Submission by Wicklow County Council Maritime Business Development Group

The purpose of this submission is to highlight the existence of the Maritime Business Development Group and the fact that Wicklow County Council recognises the importance of Offshore Wind Energy to the local economy.

The implications of the development of offshore renewable energy in the East Coast North and East Coast South Arrays for County Wicklow are significant, as are the potential opportunities for economic development and job creation.

Consent has been granted for Arklow Bank Phase 2 (Phase 1 operational since 2004) and for Codling Bank Phase 1. The consented developments off the Wicklow coast have the potential to power up to 750,000 homes

It is very important for Wicklow that we are in a position to benefit from economic development, growth and jobs as a result of any such development.

Some of the key recommendations of Wicklow County Council/Wicklow Maritime Business Development Group

1. That given the potential impact on the County, Wicklow County Council should be invited participate in future dialogue as a stakeholder.
2. That a balance be achieved between energy generated to meet the needs of the domestic market and the export market in order to ensure that the national and local economies benefit from the significant investment.
3. That storage and smart grid technology be prioritised
4. That opportunities for spin offs such as data centres be explored
5. That in the interest of sustainable jobs , expertise be developed locally
6. The investment be made in Wicklow's harbours in order that they are in a position to service the industry
7. That a series of marine clusters be developed to reflect the locations of the proposed developments
8. That maritime spatial planning for areas where consent has been granted for offshore energy be expedited and that stakeholders at local level be invited to engage with the process. Perhaps a pilot regional or local MSP could be considered.
9. That local authorities become actively involved in areas within their expertise such as communications, stakeholder engagement, business enterprise supports, coastal zone management, near and foreshore licensing,

County Wicklow is ideally located from a geographic perspective to take advantage of any developments that may take place in the Offshore renewable Energy Sector along the East Coast.

The need for Ireland in to meet its targets in reducing our green house gas emissions may serve as a catalyst in kick starting our offshore renewable sector.

Action 1

Wicklow County Council supports the call for a dedicated Offshore Wind Working Group. Such a group should include coastal counties likely to be impacted by offshore renewable energy. Through the involvement of local authorities governance issues such as communication and stakeholder engagement can be addressed.

Action 2

3. It is the view of this local authority that exchequer support should be provided to assist local ports and ancillary facilities to gear up to facilitate the development of offshore renewable energy in a timely manner

9. Exchequer support should be provided via LEOs for employment support and research into spin offs e.g aquaculture, and development of clusters.

Action 4

10. A balance must be achieved between the development of energy for domestic use and for export

11. Resources need to be invested into exploring methods of smart storage and of energy use e.g data centres

Action 5

14 Through local clusters and working with the LEOs capacity can be built up in this area . Many of our maritime counties have years of expertise mainly in fishing and seafaring this expertise can be harnessed to develop our offshore wind energy capability

Internships / training exchanges with countries that have established offshore energy capabilities would be beneficial

Action 6

15. Ireland's blue economy has been promoted in a general way. There are shortcomings in the areas of licensing and maritime spatial planning that need to be addressed . Use the expertise of the local authorities in areas of planning, licensing and communications.

Action 8.

20. Maritime spatial planning needs to commence immediately for the areas such as off the Wicklow coast where there is consent for commercial projects.

Local authorities should play a role in the planning consent process as this is their area of expertise.

Action 9

20. A baseline study should be carried out as part of the MSP process

Action 10

24. Exchequer funding should be made available for an evaluation of infrastructure requirements and for the development of ports in a sustainable manner.

County Wicklow Economic Think Tank

The County Wicklow Economic Think Tank (CWETT) is a collaboration between local business, Wicklow County Council and Wicklow Local Enterprise Office. The CWETT Action Plan (which was adopted by Wicklow County Council in January 2015), was developed in order to drive and maintain economic activity and increase employment in the county.

The formation of the Maritime Business Development Group (MBDG) is an action under the CWETT Action Plan. The objective is to assess the opportunities and to capitalise on the maritime infrastructure in County Wicklow.

One such opportunity specifically referred to in the CWETT Action Plan is Offshore Wind

“Offshore Wind Farms

Objective: Develop Wicklow as a centre for servicing the needs of the proposed major expansion of east coast offshore wide farms, during the mobilisation and permanent phases of this project.

1. Establish an Expert Group to Evaluate the Opportunity

An Expert Group, facilitated by Wicklow County Council should be established as a matter of priority. The purpose of this group is to evaluate the scale of the opportunity for County Wicklow and which elements it is best placed to secure. The findings of this Expert Group would inform the work of subsequent Task Forces.

Wicklow County Council should facilitate the establishment of an Expert Group. Local businesses should be active contributors and/or participants on this Group. The ultimate success of the County in realising this opportunity is dependent on the ability of the local government and business community to establish and implement a Strategic Alliance.

2. Establish a Wind Energy Task Force

The purpose of this action oriented Task Force would be to co-ordinate the actions required to realise the opportunity for the County. The work of this Task Force would be informed by the findings of the Expert Group proposed in action 1.

3. Designate Off Shore Wind Farm Development as a Strategic Investment Project

This will include ensuring that necessary infrastructural projects across roads, ports etc. are ‘shovel ready’ to meet the needs of the Wind-Farm Industry Investors and Contractors”

County Wicklow Economic Think Tank Action Plan 2015

WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2016 – 2022

CHAPTER 5 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Table 5.1 County Wicklow Economic Think Tank Strategic Objectives Objective Actions would include Ensure Wicklow is “Open for Business” - Ensure the infrastructural requirements of businesses are in place. - Establish specific locations as ‘gateway hubs’ for development. - Ensure the county is attractive to both businesses and their employees. –

“Establish a Wind Energy Task Force. - Designate off shore wind farm development as a ‘strategic investment project’. – “

CHAPTER 9 – INFRASTRUCTURE

Electricity Generation

(1) Wind Energy

The generation of electricity from wind is the principle renewable alternative being developed in Ireland at present, primarily due to the good wind resources available. The entire Country is richly endowed with wind resources. Although Ireland only accounts for 2% of the total EU land mass, we have some 6% of EU wind Chapter 9 | Infrastructure Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-2022 resources. Per capita, we are one of the richest countries in the world in terms of wind energy. In 2014 Wind Energy made up 18.3% of gross electricity consumption in Ireland. Access to the electricity transmission grid is an issue for the supply of wind-generated electricity, which is controlled by EirGrid and in some instances the ESB. While a land-use plan cannot impact directly on the manner in which the grid is regulated or developed, through the development of a Wind Energy Strategy, other planning ‘bottlenecks’ can be somewhat addressed through:

- the identification of locations where wind energy projects will be favoured and supported;
- the setting out of a clear set of parameters to be considered in the locating of wind farms; and
- providing clear guidance about the design and layout of wind farm projects.

Wicklow County Council has produced the County Wicklow Wind Energy Strategy which forms part of this plan. The Strategy supports a plan led approach to wind energy development in County Wicklow and sets out ‘Areas Most Favoured’, ‘Area Less Favoured’ and ‘Areas Not Favoured’ for Wind Energy Development within the County. It is the policy of the Council to maximise wind energy development within the County in all three of these areas, on a case by case basis, subject to meeting specific requirements and guidance contained within the strategy. The County Wicklow Wind Energy Strategy is set out in Volume 3 of this plan.

Wind Energy Objectives

CCE6

To encourage the development of wind energy in accordance with the County Wicklow Wind Energy Strategy and in particular to allow wind energy exploitation in most locations in the County subject to:

- consideration of any designated nature conservation areas (SACs, NHAs, SPAs, SAAOs etc) and any associated buffers;
- impacts on Wicklow’s landscape designations;
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particular cognisance and regard being taken of the impact on wind turbines on residential amenity particularly with respect to noise and shadow flicker; • impacts on visual and recreational amenity; • impacts on ‘material assets’ such as towns, infrastructure and heritage sites; • consideration of land cover and land uses on or adjacent to the site; and • best practice in the design and siting of wind turbines, and all ancillary works including access roads and overhead cables.

CCE7

To facilitate the development of off-shore wind energy projects insofar as onshore facilities such as substations/connections to the grid may be required.

CCE8

To support community-based wind energy projects.

Electricity Transmission and Distribution

In order to facilitate the expansion in electricity generation installation, particularly wind farms, the grid itself will require development and expansion. In Wicklow, the grid has three lines – from Fassaroe in the north to Arklow in the south (roughly along the N11 corridor), from Turlough Hill in the Wicklow Gap down to Hollywood and from Baltinglass to Hollywood. It is important for the future development of electricity in the County that these strategic pieces of infrastructure are protected from inappropriate development in their immediate environs and that their scope for development is maintained. The corridors along these routes can therefore be considered ‘strategic infrastructure corridors’.

Transmission and Distribution Objectives

CCE17

To support the development and expansion of the electricity transmission and distribution grid, including the development of new lines, pylons and substations as required.

CCE18

To suitably manage development within 35m of existing 110KV/220kV transmission lines.
Chapter 9 | Infrastructure Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-2022

CCE19

To support and facilitate the development of landing locations for any cross channel power interconnectors.