



Irish Wind Energy Association
Sycamore House
Millennium Park
Osberstown
Naas
Co. Kildare

Administrative Officer,
Planning & Enterprise Development Department,
Clare County Council,
Áras Contae an Chláir
New Road,
Ennis,
Co. Clare

By email: to forwardplan@clarecoco.ie

Date: 9th March 2015

Re: Issues Booklet for County Clare Development Plan 2017-2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Irish Wind Energy Association (“IWEA”) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the **Issues Booklet for the County Clare Development Plan 2017-2023**. As the County Development Plan will inform the vision, objectives and policies of the new plan for County Clare (2017-2023), including its Wind Energy Strategy (WES) and its Renewable Energy Strategy (RES), IWEA feels it is critically important to make a submission at this pre-draft stage. We very much welcome the opportunity and look forward to engaging constructively with you in the future.

IWEA would like to reiterate that we welcome Clare County Council’s positive support of renewables and wind energy in particular. Renewable energy development is a vital part of Ireland’s strategy to tackle two major challenges facing us today – ensuring a secure supply of energy and combating climate change.

We thank you for the opportunity to contribute at this first stage consultation and we look forward to contributing further as the strategic plan progresses.

Yours sincerely,

*sent by email, no signature required

Caitríona Diviney,
Chief Operating Officer,
Irish Wind Energy Association.

1.0 Introduction

The Irish Wind Energy Association (“IWEA”) is Ireland’s leading renewable energy representative body and as such has an active interest in the potential for sustainable energy. IWEA is committed to promoting the use of wind energy in Ireland and beyond as an economically viable and environmentally sound alternative to thermal or nuclear generation and promotes awareness and understanding of wind power as the primary renewable energy resource.

Renewable energy development is a vital part of Ireland’s strategy to tackle two major challenges facing us today – ensuring a secure supply of energy and combating climate change. IWEA supports proper planning and sustainable development and recognises that development of wind energy projects must afford clear protection to residents while enabling Ireland to develop our huge natural clean energy renewable resources and meet our EU2020 targets. IWEA members are involved in developing more than 85% of the wind farm capacity that is planned to be built from now to 2020.

1.1 EU commitments and DCENR’s RES-E target

In the first instance, we wish to remind Clare County Council of Ireland’s need to support renewable energy which also stems from it’s EU commitments, namely EU Directive 2009/28/EC on the Promotion of Renewable Energy Sources which came into force in April 2009 and which establishes a binding target of 20% of overall EU energy consumption coming from renewable sources by 2020 as well as a binding 10% minimum target for energy from renewable resources in the share of transportation fuels. Ireland’s target under the directive is for renewable resources to account for 16% of total energy consumption by 2020. Failure to meet these targets could result in EU sanctions. In line with these commitments, DCENR announced a revised target for electricity from renewable energy sources (RES-E) of 40% by 2020.

The European Union is also now in the process of agreeing the framework for a further series of targets for renewable energy towards 2030, and Ireland in October 2014 agreed to new EU 2030 targets which seek a 40% reduction in Green House Gas Emissions and a binding EU target for renewable energy of “at least 27%”.

1.2 Benefits of wind energy development to Clare County Council

As the vast majority of new renewable capacity will be provided by on-shore wind, the 40% target is a significant challenge for the Irish wind industry as a whole. An approximate doubling of wind capacity will need to be installed on-shore in Ireland within the coming years if we are to meet our 2020 RES-E target. The expansion of the Irish wind industry will be an extremely positive economic development for Clare County Council and can result in

greater grid security and stability, job creation, Local Authority rates and development contributions, and will bring about a reduction of GHG emissions.

1.3 The Promotion of Renewable Energy

IWEA welcomes Clare County Council's recognition in its Issues Booklet that *"in order to drive the County forward first class communications, energy and other infrastructure are needed."* In terms of the question regarding how the Development Plan should encourage renewable energy production and the use of alternative forms of energy, IWEA suggests that clear and targeted focused objectives and policies that demonstrate the manner in which renewable forms of energy are encouraged, should be included in the document.

IWEA is cognisant of the fact that Clare County Council already has both a Wind Energy Strategy (2011-2017) and a Renewable Energy Strategy (2014-2020) and commends the Council for its foresight and commitment to renewable energy development, by implementing both of these plans.

IWEA recommends that any changes to these strategies should be mindful of EU and national energy policy as well as ensuring that the strategies are prepared in accordance with the SEAI document entitled *"A Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies"*.

The inclusion of specific policies and objectives in the new Plan that promote the further development of renewable energy will enable Clare County Council to:

- Develop a sustainable, wind energy industry employing construction and professional service providers and attracting significant capital investment;
- Enhance the vibrancy of the county as a renewable energy leader;
- Support rural development in a sustainable manner;
- Deliver significant community benefit including the lowering of energy prices and the provision of land lease payments to local landowners annually; and,
- Deliver significant commercial rates revenue to County Clare annually.

1.4 Conclusion

IWEA are hopeful that the new Plan will contribute to achieving the continued development of the wind and renewable energy resource in the County. There is an opportunity for Clare County Council to take a proactive approach in the new County Development Plan to further realise the wind energy development potential of the County and to adopt policies and objectives that enhance sustainable development. We encourage the Local Authority to seize this valuable opportunity.