

Irish Wind Energy Association
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Administrative Officer,
Planning & Development,
Wicklow County Council,
County Buildings,
Wicklow Town.

By email: to planreview@wicklowcoco.ie

Date: 23rd December 2014

Re: Issues Booklet for County Wicklow Development Plan 2016-2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Irish Wind Energy Association (“IWEA”) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the **Issues Booklet for the County Wicklow Development Plan 2016-2022**. As the County Development Plan will inform the vision, objectives and policies of the new plan for County Wicklow (2016-2022), including 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 Wicklow’s 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 Wicklow County Council of Ireland’s need to support renewable energy 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 Wicklow 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 Wicklow 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 Wicklow County Council's recognition that the County has the potential to develop its renewable energy potential further during the period of the County Development Plan as set out in the Issues Paper. In terms of the question regarding how can alternative forms of energy be best promoted and developed, IWEA suggests that clear and target focused objectives and policies that demonstrate the manner in which renewable forms of energy are encouraged should be included in the document. IWEA also welcome the acknowledgement of the current DoECLG Wind Energy Planning Guidelines, which should be followed in the preparation of this plan, along with any subsequent revision.

IWEA wish to reiterate that when preparing the Renewable Energy Strategy, that it should be prepared in accordance with SEAI document entitled "*A Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies*".

The inclusion of specific policies and objections in the new Plan that promote the further development of renewable energy will enable Wicklow 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;
- Contribute to the funding of the construction of an electrical grid infrastructure that would be the basis of the new renewable energy industry; and,
- Deliver significant commercial rates revenue to County Wicklow annually.

1.4 Conclusion

IWEA are hopeful that the new Plan will contribute to achieving the development of the wind and renewable energy resource in the County. There is an opportunity for Wicklow County Council to take a proactive approach in the new County Development Plan to 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.