



Submission No. 139

Dear Clare County Council,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to input into the proposed Clare County Development Plan 2022 to 2028.

We are a community of farmers, farming in the Ballycannon, Ballycar, Cappateemore and Glennacross north of Meelick, Co. Clare. We are advocates of sustainable and green energy and are keen to diversify our farming enterprises into the renewable energy sector. For 10 years, we have been investigating the possibility of developing a project and recently started the environmental studies necessary to determine the suitability of a project on our lands.

We are very supportive of the county councils' ambitions to achieve the national and European targets of 70% renewable energy on the Irish grid by 2030 and net zero carbon from the grid in 2050. We are also supportive of the fact that Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Environment is among the key issues that have been identified to be addressed and supported in next development plan.

We believe that people living in the local community near renewable energy developments should benefit from these developments and propose that €2/MWh of energy produced over the first 15 years of a project is used for community gain. This is so as to frontload the benefit a community can get from such a project. Examples of such gain could include contributions to local community capital projects, greener homes schemes and contributions to homeowners neighbouring the projects etc.

We strongly believe that farmers should be allowed to diversify their land use for renewable energy projects such as wind and solar and propose that this should be a key feature of the development plan.

As a group we have studied the existing wind energy strategy for the county. We consider it a very comprehensive and well thought out document. We support the retention of the findings and guidelines of this document, in particular, the zoning, energy potential and landscape assessments. Clare County should promote and continue with this strategy in the new development plan

It should be noted that since the previous plan there have been improvements in wind turbine technology. Newer wind turbines are more energy efficient, are quieter and have more control options. They typically have longer blades than previous models. The use of the latest technology should be supported in the development plan.

Solar has emerged as a viable renewable energy technology in Ireland. The current plan does not assess the use of solar power in detail. We believe the solar power should be promoted in the next plan. We also strongly believe that the co-location of solar power with wind projects should be promoted as it makes better and more efficient use of grid infrastructure.

Energy storage technology will be an important part of the future energy system. This will be because of the high penetration levels of wind and solar power that will be on the system. Clare County Council need to support the development of these installations to facilitate the development of renewable energy.

The costs and expertise required, as we have found, to develop renewable energy projects is considerable. Small community groups such as us, see development costs and expertise as major challenges. We propose that Clare County Council in the next development plan should support and encourage community groups and individuals to partner with experienced companies in renewable

energy projects so that they can get their projects off the ground and follow best practices. In our experience, we believe it would be impossible for a group such as ourselves to develop a project without the support of an experienced renewable energy company.

Grid infrastructure is an important part of any renewable electricity development. The next county development plan must support the further development of this infrastructure as it is needed to reach our renewable energy targets. The use of existing infrastructure where there is capacity for expansion should also be supported.

From our studies, in the region of Clare where we live, the grid infrastructure is very strong because of the network that was built around Ardnacrusha power station. There is a large nearby demand for electricity from Limerick city. Nearby electricity demands for power generation are very advantageous as it reduces the electrical losses associated with the transmission of power over electricity lines, this in turn reduces the carbon emissions from the electricity system. For this reason, renewable energy projects should be encouraged in this area. In the current plans Clare County Council has identified the nearby Sliabh Bernagh Uplands an LCA which encompasses the Sliabh Bernagh Range and Broadford Hills as a strategic area for the development of medium to large scale wind farms. We are supportive of this assessment and believe that these areas present Clare with its best opportunity to develop the wind and solar projects needed to achieve our climate ambitions. For this reason, we propose that Clare County Council maintain the existing zoning and guidelines for this area in the next development plan

We are very keen to work with Clare County Council on the development of its climate ambitions are available to meet with the council if it is considered of benefit

Yours Sincerely,

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