

Submission for:

'Draft Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029'

Tourism NOT turbines

We are all aware of climate change and the need to reduce carbon emissions. We also need clean energy and sustainable employment.

The constant message from Wind Energy Ireland is that wind energy is the only solution to combat climate change and it dangles the carrot of increased rates payments to the Council and the promise of more jobs in rural areas. This is of great concern for Leitrim citizens.

We challenge the belief that the wind energy industry is a suitable solution for combatting Climate Change and a worthwhile source of employment here in Leitrim. We present the alternative view that nurturing the growing rural tourism sector is a far more sustainable way of creating employment and keeping our young people working here, which in turn would generate income for the Council. In addition, we think the Government should consider small scale, community based, renewable energy projects which would truly cut carbon emissions and also create long term employment in our County as the way forward.

Wind Energy Ireland makes claims about the significant number of jobs created by the wind industry. The reality is that wind farms are developed using imported wind turbines. There is only limited local employment involved in the construction followed by a very small number of long-term operational jobs which most likely will not even

be local. For example, for the proposed Croagh wind farm near Dromahair, Coillte state that only 2 or maybe 3 long term jobs will arise. These jobs come at huge cost to the tax payer because of the subsidies given to the big corporations involved in wind generation.

In contrast, local tourism creates varied jobs and these in turn create a ripple effect. Tourism providers benefit, as do shops, cafes, petrol stations, marketing, printers etc. etc. People employed in these businesses then spend their earnings again and again, benefiting others, a circular sustainable economy.

It is time to wake up and protect the biodiversity and natural beauty of our landscape, which is the core of our tourism sector. Failte Ireland figures show 71% of people visit Ireland for the unspoiled landscape. Failte Ireland is careful to omit views of landscapes containing wind turbines from its marketing materials.

Leitrim tourism providers working together with Hidden Heartlands, The Wild Atlantic Way, Slow Adventure, Green / Blueways and Leitrim Co. Co. are all investing in this growing sector. Irish people and visitors from abroad are truly delighted with the unspoiled Leitrim landscape.

The North Leitrim landscape and local communities are now under threat from even more wind farms. There are plans for 6 developments in the Drumkeerin, Dromahair and Manorhamilton areas. If these plans go ahead, Leitrim will have an additional 46 turbines (that we know of) and a major battery storage facility. The turbines proposed are of a monstrous scale (up to 185m tall) and more suited to offshore than our drumlin landscape,

where there is a high risk of landslide and pollution to our environment and pristine waters. The enormous environmental devastation caused by the major landslides at Shass Mountain and Meenbog in neighbouring Donegal are prime examples of the huge risks to our environment posed by these enormous industrial developments.

Worldwide, and in Ireland there are major concerns in relation to the risks to human health arising from Shadow Flicker and Noise, both audible and sub-audible. Current guidelines are seriously out of date, wind energy planning applications are currently assessed under 2006 guidelines, which in turn were copied from older 1997 UK guidelines.

We call on Leitrim County Council to protect local people and not to grant any more wind energy planning applications. Strong protection needs to be in place for the environment and communities impacted by the wind industry.

Wind farms already contribute 22% of commercial rates in Leitrim, the highest contribution in any one county in Ireland. These existing rates will continue to be an important source of income. We request that Leitrim county council halt all further wind farm proposals and promote other important and more appropriate sectors such as tourism.

Leitrim is already making a positive contribution to Ireland's National Strategic Policy on renewable energy and its move to a low energy carbon future. 64% of electricity used in Leitrim is already produced by local

wind farms. (*Good Energies Alliance Ireland 2019, Croga report*)

In regard to wind energy combatting climate change, we must bear in mind that the manufacture, transport, construction and de-commissioning of turbines creates an enormous carbon footprint which is not assessed in the carbon emissions savings attributed to wind energy.

According to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland our present national fleet of wind turbines, saves no more than 4% of our annual carbon emissions. The devastation of unspoiled rural landscapes is far too high a price to pay for such a small benefit.

The release of carbon due to disruption of boglands during wind farm construction and extreme negative effects on the local ecology have to also be considered.

Creating renewable energy and cutting carbon emissions are two separate and very different aspects of combatting climate change.

The productivity of any wind turbine is only 33% of its rated capacity, sometimes far less (Garvagh Glebe wind farm 2017 - 23% of potential). Coillte have stated the proposed larger turbines are still rated 33% productive. You have to wonder whether continuing to use something so inefficient and detrimental to the ecology is a good idea.

We would call for a more holistic approach to cutting carbon emissions and combatting climate change.

North Leitrim has the potential to become a test bed for multiple tried and trusted technologies operating in

unison: small scale wind, rooftop solar, hydro & bio-energy, as well as emerging technologies - all functioning safely within the coping capacity of the local environment.

In short, North Leitrim could become a model of sustainable energy advancement - which would allow for agriculture to be revitalised - while ensuring woodland, wilderness & mountain bogland areas return to nature & so are allowed to continue to provide an essential service as wildlife habitat & carbon sink.

The Leitrim landscape has reached saturation point for wind energy developments while in contrast small scale sustainable energy and tourism are seedlings ready to grow and flourish.

GIANT turbines are unsuitable for and have no place in Leitrim.

We trust Leitrim County Council will consider these points carefully with respect to the Leitrim County Development Plan.

Thank you.

