



INDUSTRY
NEWSLETTER

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Publication of the draft National Planning Framework

The Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government has published a draft National Planning Framework (NPF) which is set to replace the previous National Spatial Strategy published in 2002.

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Transition to a low carbon economy is a key priority for the NPF to tackle Ireland's higher than average (45%) carbon-intensity per capita. On renewable energy, it is targeted to deliver 40% of Ireland's electricity needs from renewable sources by 2020 with a strategic aim of in excess of 50% by 2030 and more by 2040 and beyond using wind, wave, solar, biomass and hydro sources.

The draft strategy places a major emphasis on the potential of off-shore technologies, significant investment in the National Smart Grid Plan and the accommodation of onshore renewables on large tracts of land in the ownership of semi-state bodies. It is proposed that future investment in renewables will need to be more geographically focused in order to minimise the amount of additional grid investment required, for example through collocation of renewables and grid connections. The forthcoming Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework will aim to identify strategic areas for the sustainable development of renewable electricity projects of scale, in a sustainable manner, compatible with environmental and cultural heritage, landscape and amenity considerations. It is stated that the development of the Wind Energy Guidelines and the Renewable Electricity Plan (both of which are subject to SEA and AA) will also be prioritised to facilitate informed decision making in onshore renewable infrastructure.

The deadline for submissions on the draft NPF has been extended to **12 noon on Friday 10th November 2017**.

Full details of the National Planning Framework and the draft document can be viewed on www.npf.ie.

Public consultation on Renewable Energy Support Scheme

Details on the development and design of a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) for Ireland were recently announced by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE). The RESS is intended to replace the existing REFIT support scheme, which closed on 31 December 2015. The RESS is supported by an Economic Analysis and an Assessment of Models to support Community Ownership of Renewable Energy in Ireland.

A range of policy options are set out on which the Department is seeking feedback. The economic evidence indicates that meeting Ireland's renewable electricity targets and renewable diversity ambitions are more cost-effectively achieved at large and medium scale, while at the same time delivering wider policy objectives such as: broadening and diversifying the renewable technology mix, enhancing security of energy supply, promoting economic development, and supporting community and citizen participation in the transition to a low carbon economy, that must be met, while simultaneously delivering value for money for the consumer.

Micro-generation has not been included directly under the emerging principles of the new RESS. Financial support is to be allocated through a competitive bidding process through auctions and projects will need to meet certain pre-qualification criteria in order to take part in the auctions. The research carried out on behalf of the Department indicates that a Floating Feed In Premium (FIP) is the most cost effective financial support mechanism.

The RESS does not include setting a level of ambition for renewable electricity generation. Rather it is being developed as a scheme that can support a range of ambitions. This includes the potential objective of maintaining the target 2020 level of 40% RES-E out to 2030 as the baseline ambition. More ambitious potential objectives of 45%, 50% and 55% are also examined.

The public consultation will remain open until **4pm on Friday 10th November 2017**, and full details of the RESS public consultation process can be found [here](#).

Public Consultation on ABP Draft Strategic Plan 2018-2023

An Bord Pleanála (ABP) has opened its public consultation on its Draft Strategic Plan for the period 2018 – 2023. The plan establishes the priority areas where the Board will focus activities for the next five years.

Four strategic goals are proposed to ensure that the Board is appropriately positioned and fit for purpose to achieve its legislative mandate into the future, as follows:

- Protecting and enhancing its reputation for independence, impartiality, trust, integrity and transparency.
- Making robust, timely, transparent, high quality decisions which support proper planning and sustainable development.
- Improving our service to meet changing customer expectations.
- Fostering a motivated, resilient and responsive organisation.

The plan will be reviewed after three years to monitor its implementation and make any revision, if necessary.

Public consultation on the Draft Strategic Plan is open until **Friday 3rd November 2017**. Details of the public consultation can be found [here](#).

Taghart Wind Farm Granted Permission

GES has recently secured planning permission for the Taghart Wind Farm 7 turbine project in County Cavan with a total output of 22.4 MW. GES provided planning consultancy services throughout the consenting process on this project from planning application through to appeal management.

A previous permission for 9 turbines with a maximum ground to tip height of up to 99.5 metres had been granted by An Bord Pleanála in 2013. The revised turbines will have a tip height of 125 metres. The project was supported by a detailed Environmental Impact Statement (Environmental Impact Assessment Report), prepared by GES. The Planning Authority, Cavan County Council, granted permission (following requests for Further Information) and the decision was subject to a First Party appeal (prepared by GES) in relation to specific conditions that had been attached, as well as third-party appeals. GES provided comprehensive responses to all third-party appeals.

Having considered all relevant matters An Bord Pleanála issued a decision to grant permission. The Board noted that the proposed development would be consistent with National and County planning policies in respect of wind energy, would not result in detrimental visual or landscape impacts and would be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The Board accepted the arguments put forward by GES that the imperceptible increase in turbine height would be offset by an increase in setback distances to the 23 dwellings within 500 metres of the turbines.

A novel condition included in the permission, at the request of GES, is that details of the turbine design, height and colour shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority, prior to commencement of development. This will allow flexibility in the turbine technology to be eventually installed on site.

The final grant of permission allows a period of up to ten years to construct the wind farm and, once commissioned, the wind farm can operate for 25 years.

The EIS project management included co-ordination of geotechnical, hydrological, noise, archaeological and traffic sub-consultants, with all other EIS sections and

planning drawings being completed by in-house staff, including noise and shadow flicker assessments.

For further information on the environmental impact assessment and planning consultancy services that GES can provide for wind farm projects, contact simon@galetechenergy.com.

Carrickallen Wind Farm

The Carrickallen Wind Farm project in County Cavan reached financial close in October and construction works are now expected to ramp up prior to the delivery of turbines in 2018. The project consists of a combination of 10 no. Senvion MM82 and MM92 turbines and once operational will have an output of 20MW.

The planning process for the project, which also includes a 38kV on site substation and an overhead line grid connection, was managed by GES from its inception in 2008. Throughout the process, GES has been responsible for the management of planning applications to Cavan County Council, requests for Further Information, planning appeals to An Bord Pleanála and the discharge of pre-commencement planning compliance conditions. The complexity of this project also required a number of amendment planning applications and grid connection planning applications.

GES has also acted as Owner's Engineer during the pre-construction phase, overseeing the detailed design of the project and managing the appointment of civil, electrical and turbine supply contractors. GES will continue in this project management role throughout the construction phase through to the commissioning of the project.

For further information on the project management services that GES can provide for wind farm projects, please contact donogh@galetechenergy.com or paulc@galetechenergy.com.

Liffey Energy Wind Turbine

Construction of the Liffey Energy Wind Turbine in Ballyjamesduff, County Cavan is now complete. The commissioning phase is now underway and the turbine is likely to be fully operational in November 2017.

GES has acted as Planning Consultants and Owner's Engineer throughout the pre-construction and construction phases, advising on all aspects of design and construction.

GES will continue to be involved in the project's operational phase via our sister company [EnergyPro Asset Management](#) who have been appointed to manage and optimise the performance of the turbine.

For further information on the asset management services that GES can provide for wind farm projects, contact donogh@galetechenergy.com.

Drumman Solar Project

GES has recently secured planning permission for the Drumman Solar project in County Cavan. The project will have an output of 5MW and comprises solar arrays, an on-site switchroom and ancillary infrastructure. GES provided planning consultancy services throughout the consenting process, from project initiation and design through to a request for Further Information.

For further information on the planning consultancy services that GES can provide for solar projects, contact simon@galetechenergy.com.

Galway Wind Park

The 169MW Galway Wind Park, located in Connemara's Cloosh Valley, has entered commercial operation and is now Ireland's largest wind farm, generating more green energy than any other wind generation site on the island.

Located south-west of Oughterard, Galway Wind Park comprises 58 Siemens 3MW wind turbines, each rated to the highest international standard and specifically engineered for the prevailing wind conditions at the Connemara site to optimise generation output performance. The project was constructed in two phases over almost three years, with main works commencing in December 2014.

The project was named Green Project of the Year at the 2017 Irish Construction Industry Awards last May. This was the project's second Irish Construction Industry Award in as many years, having scooped the prize for Excellence in Sustainability in 2016.

Further information on the Galway Wind Park can be found [here](#).