



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

28th June 2012

Noelle O'Connor,  
Planning Policy Unit,  
Planning Department,  
Kerry County Council,  
Áras an Chontae,  
Tralee

By email: [noelleoc@kerrycoco.ie](mailto:noelleoc@kerrycoco.ie)

**Re: Submission / Observation on Proposed Variation No. 8 of the Kerry County Development Plan 2009-2015 – Draft Renewable Energy Strategy**

Dear Ms. O'Connor,

IWEA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed Variation No. 8 to the Kerry County Development Plan 2009 – 2015: Draft Renewable Energy Strategy 2012. IWEA commends Kerry County Council's overall objectives to maximise renewable energy development potential within County Kerry and recognise the potential progress the application of same may offer towards meeting National targets.

The proposed Variation No. 8 includes the proposal to replace the existing 'Wind Deployment Zones April 2009' maps (Ref. Kerry County Development Plan, 2009-2015, Volume 2) with Variation No. 8 Draft Renewable Energy Strategy, Map 6 'Wind Development Zones', May 2012.

IWEA would have concerns that a number of areas zoned as 'Open to Consideration' under the existing KCC CDP 2009-2015, have been omitted from the development zones under this proposed variation. The strategic aims outlined in Section 1.1 of the proposed Variation No. 8 includes recognition from Kerry County Council that wind energy is best placed to achieve national targets for the consumption of electricity from renewable energy and it is an objective of the planning authority to continue to support the development of wind energy. Removal of zoned areas from this is likely to impact on our ability to achieve these targets.

## Designated areas

IWEA believes that there should be no blanket prohibition of development in Natura 2000 sites. The exclusion of these areas in the draft plan runs contrary to specific EU Commission advice on the implementation of Natura 2000 regulations which states that

*"The Habitats Directive does not, a priori, exclude wind farm developments in or adjacent to Natura 2000 sites. These need to be judged on a case by case basis."*<sup>1</sup>

In specific relation to the location of wind farms in areas with raptors (e.g. the hen harrier), the document states (page 34) that *"because local conditions differ widely between sites decisions should be taken only after assessments based on careful case-by case analyses"*. The Appropriate Assessment process enables the planning authority to assess if developments in Natura 2000 sites are likely to affect the integrity of the designation. Therefore IWEA believes that there should not be a blanket prohibition of development in Natura 2000 sites and projects should be considered on a case by case basis.

It should be noted that these sites are often the most suitable for wind farm development because of their wind resource potential, their remote location and their proximity to the large grid infrastructure projects. Over 50% of the Gate 2 and Gate 3 offers for Kerry are located within designated areas, which seriously jeopardises their potential for delivery.

## Viability of Wind Development Zones

IWEA is concerned that the local constraints which impact wind energy development were not taken into consideration in the analysis that led to the selection of preferred areas for wind farm development or areas open to consideration for such development. Looking at constraints such as distances from towns and villages, a separation figure of 500m from houses (in accordance with Department of Environment planning guidelines for wind energy development), designated areas and wind energy resource, analysis of the implementation of the proposed variation shows that the potential for wind energy projects is significantly reduced. Analysis of the viability of the Wind Deployment Zones specified as 'Open to Consideration' or 'Strategically Suitable' in the proposed 8th variation to the Kerry County Development Plan 2009-2015 shows that only 4.5% of the land zoned as 'Open to Consideration' is actually viable for wind deployment when some basic constraint factors are applied. Given that the areas that are 'open to consideration' and 'strategically suitable' only amounts to 15.9% of the total area of Kerry, this results in a mere 0.7% of the county being suitable for wind development.

IWEA is also concerned at the exclusion of large parts of the county in the north and east. IWEA believes this exclusion is not warranted and should be reviewed.

## Economic Impact

The removal of a number of zones currently identified as 'Open to Consideration' is of significant concern to IWEA as areas within the existing CDP identified as suitable for wind energy are likely to be the subject of commitments by developers /landowners in terms of EIA's, land agreements, etc

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/Wind\\_farms.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/Wind_farms.pdf)

and significant time and resources may be lost should areas identified in the current CDP be removed in the proposed revision. Wind energy developers and the transmission system operator have expended large amounts of capital in carrying out investigations to determine if generation and connection projects in this area can be developed without affecting the integrity of Natura 2000 designations. This work has been done in the legitimate expectation that due regard will be given to EU guidelines by the local authority. The introduction of this variation would have the effect of jeopardizing existing investment in the area and undermining investor confidence for future developments.

The availability of a significant wind resource in the county provides Kerry with the opportunity to develop an industry with significant benefits to the local economy and broader society. Benefits will flow to the people of Kerry through land lease payments, local road upgrades, payment of significant commercial rates. There will also be benefits to local companies in engaging with construction, legal, finance and other professional services. IWEA believes that the proposed variation will significantly impact the development of wind energy projects on Co. Kerry which will have a knock-on effect on economic considerations, such as local authority rates income, investment and job creation.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, IWEA has significant concerns over the removal of a number of zones that are currently 'Open to Consideration' as it significantly reduces the land available for viable wind farm development. We are also concerned on the impact this change would have on significant investments which have already been made in the area and the investor confidence for developing future projects. We trust that this submission will inform the preparation of Variation No. 8 to the Kerry County Development Plan 2009 – 2015: Draft Renewable Energy Strategy 2012 and we look forward to any further opportunities to contribute to the strategy preparation process.

Yours sincerely,

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Mary Doorly  
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Irish Wind Energy Association