

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

**MINUTES OF IN-COMMITTEE MEETING
OF OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL ON
PLANNING BRIEFING ON
“COUNTY OFFALY WIND STRATEGY TO 2015”**

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE ON
MONDAY, 17TH JUNE 2013 AT 11 A.M.**

PRESENT:	Cllr. P. Ormond (Presiding), Cllrs. N. Bourke, M. Buckley, J. Butterfield, J. Carroll, P. Clendennen, D. Dolan, E. Dooley, S. Dooley, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, C. Hanniffy, N. Hogan, J. Leahy, T. McKeigue, S. Moylan-Ryan, D. Owens, G. Plunkett, L. Quinn, P. Rowland.
APOLOGIES:	Cllr. T. McLoughlin.
IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., Mr. A. Murray, S.P., Ms. L. Mitchell, S.E.P., Ms. A. Walsh, A/S.E.P., Mr. E. Lynch, A.P., Mr. D. Meehan, E.P., Ms. B. Maher, E.P., Mr. T. Shanahan, S.E., Ms. M. Cleary, Meetings Administrator.

Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach advised the members that the meeting was convened following their request at the May monthly meeting for a briefing on the Council’s Wind Strategy. Mr. D. Kirrane, DOS advised that the Planning staff proposed to provide a briefing on the components of the “*County Offaly Wind Strategy to 2015*” which is included in the *Offaly County Development Plan 2009-2015* and the process involved in assessing applications. He advised that there is currently only one Wind Energy Planning Application currently lodged to Offaly County Council and that he was unaware of any discussions held with An Bord Pleanála, relating to other wind energy development proposals. Accordingly, he advised that the Planning Section will not be commenting on companies and/or various prospective sites.

Mr. E. Lynch, A.P., gave a detailed presentation on the “*County Offaly Wind Strategy to 2015*”, which was adopted in January 2009. He advised that the Strategy consists of a written statement and maps which show where large-scale wind energy developments could be considered. Mr. E. Lynch outlined the rationale behind the selection of areas identified in the Strategy as suitable for development. He informed the members that as part of the development of the next County Development Plan, the “*County Offaly Wind Strategy to 2015*” is being reviewed at this time.

Ms. L. Mitchell, S.E.P., outlined the process by which Strategic Infrastructure Developments applications for Wind Farms are considered by An Bord Pleanála noting what An Bord Pleanála considers when making a decision.

The members thanked Mr. E. Lynch and Ms. L. Mitchell for their informative presentations. Cllr. Noel Burke requested that a copy of the presentations be issued to the elected members and this was agreed to.

During the lengthy discussion that ensued members expressed dissatisfaction with the members’ limited functions in relation to the consideration of Wind Energy applications that are determined to be Strategic Infrastructure Developments and thereby under the remit of An Bord Pleanála. They noted their involvement in the process and welcomed the review of the “*County Offaly Wind Strategy to 2015*”.

In responding to questions raised Mr. E. Lynch advised that that it is not technically possible to place all cables underground. He also advised that the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines provide for

Community Based Projects and that the guidelines do not specify the number or height of turbines that can be included in Community Based Projects.

In a response to a further query relating to wind energy applications on lands that are not indicated in the Wind Energy Areas, Mr. E. Lynch advised that section 5.1 of the current Wind Strategy for Offaly states the following:

“Wind Energy shall be permitted in the County as follows;-

- In Areas Suitable for Wind Energy Development – Development of Wind Farms and smaller wind energy projects shall be open for consideration.*
- In all other areas Wind Energy Developments shall not normally be permitted – except as provided for under exemption provisions.”*

It was also noted that should wind energy developments that are to be dealt with as Strategic Infrastructure Development be proposed on lands that are not indicated in the Wind Energy Areas, the decision on these applications lies with An Bord Pleanála and not the Planning Authority.

Cllr. C. Hanniffy informed the meeting that she understood that a review of the 2006 National Guidelines was scheduled to commence later in the summer and that the Council would get an opportunity to input into this review. This review was welcomed by the members.

Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., in responding to questions raised by Cllr. J. Butterfield, advised that in accordance with Offaly County Council Standing Orders that the Written Questions submitted by him on 6th June 2013 were referred to the Area Committee. Mr. D. Kirrane advised that a response would issue to him later in the week. Mr. D. Kirrane noted that it was not in the Council’s remit to give advice to landowners, and as in all matters legal advice, he suggested, should be sought by persons prior to signing any agreement. He advised that it is anticipated that the Draft County Development Plan, including the Draft Wind Strategy, will be circulated to the members during August 2013.

In response to a query requesting information on the financial benefit of Wind Energy developments in Offaly Mr. D. Kirrane acknowledged that they may be significant (€3,015 per megawatt for development contributions) but that a development would only be considered if it demonstrates compliance and is a sustainable development.

Mr. E. Lynch advised that the Guidelines provide an indication that 500m as an appropriate set back distance but that this distance is not prescriptive. He advised that the noise assessment would be a scientific assessment and would be site specific.

Ms. L. Mitchell clarified that a third party appeal to An Bord Pleanála relating to a Strategic Infrastructure Development costs €50.

In closing the discussion, the Cathaoirleach thanked the members and executive for their contributions and it was agreed that a copy of the presentations would be circulated to the members.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED:

_____ **CATHAOIRLEACH**

_____ **RUNAÍ**

15th July 2013