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Galway Wind Park: SSE Renewables

Wind land 'disappearing' in local authority plans

Acreege deemed suitable for onshore wind farm construction has decreased substantially in local authority development plans, WEI 2022 has heard. **p2**



Headroom for green hydrogen exports

Ireland has the potential to establish itself as an exporter of green hydrogen, according to developers of the country's initial electrolyser projects including Bord na Mona renewables head John Reilly (above). **p3**

Time for wind 'master plan', says Eirgrid chief

The developer-led approach cannot continue if Ireland is to achieve its end-of-decade renewable electricity target of 80%, Wind Energy Ireland 2022 has heard.

Eirgrid chief executive Mark Foley (right) said the power sector is approaching a "fundamental point of philosophical difference" on the way forward.

Foley credited the wind industry's entrepreneurial spirit with delivering the 40% by 2020 goal and said the grid company has honoured all connection agreements to date.

However, he warned that for 2030 and beyond "more structure" is required on how generation is sited and planned.

"We cannot and won't deliver our objectives by the ongoing developer-led proposition," he told delegates in Dublin on day two of the annual conference.

"There has to be some order in terms of an overall plan-led proposition, and I don't apologise for saying that. We can't keep going with the developer-led system." The Eirgrid boss acknowledged its recent



Photo: reNEWS

grid development blueprint *Shaping our Electricity Future* has taken some criticism, partly as it was based on the previous 70% 2030 renewable electricity target rather than a later upgraded 80% goal.

Onshore wind developers are also unhappy with the plan as it identifies just over 1GW of new capacity this decade, far short of the around 4GW government target.

"We backed offshore wind (in the Eirgrid strategy). It is the right solution," Foley said.

"I know there is a question mark about whether it can come in on time or not but 5GW in the Irish Sea is the right strategic

solution for Ireland as it is in the right place, close to demand, shallow seabed and leveraging technology that is proven."

The strategy will be updated by the year-end to take account of the higher 80% target although the revamp will not focus on technology but the economics of the plan, he added.

Foley said Eirgrid has been "radically transformed" since publishing a new company roadmap in 2019 to put it on a path to deliver the infrastructure required for 2030. "We are unrecognisable," he told the conference.

The company has beefed up its engineering and technical skills but Foley said the TSO has more work to do.

The company is now taking decisions, such as the undergrounding of power cables and changing infrastructure locations, that were "unthinkable" five years ago, he added.

"We will make those hard-call decisions whatever the cost because they de-risk the proposition, allow it to get done faster and get you connected faster," he said.

TRENDING ON reNEWS.BIZ

Carbon Trust to launch 16 new offshore R&D projects

The Carbon Trust's Offshore Wind Accelerator is launching 16 new R&D projects this year spanning logistics and operations and maintenance, cables, electrical systems, foundations, yield and performance. Tenders for each area will be open to interested parties this month via the Carbon Trust's website.

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Red Rock JV refinances 241MW Swedish wind farm

A joint venture of Red Rock Power and CapMan Infra has completed a €180m refinancing of its 241MW Overturingen wind farm in central Sweden. The new consortium of lenders comprises of DekaBank, NatWest, NordLB and Bank of China.

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JDN installs first French offshore turbine

Jan De Nul jack-up Vole au Vent has installed the first offshore turbine, a 6MW GE machine, in French waters at the 480MW Saint-Nazaire wind farm.

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Nordex secures 30MW Finnish hardware order

Nordex has received an order from Low Carbon to supply five N163/5.X turbines for the 30MW Mörknässkogen onshore wind farm near Vaasa in Finland. Commercial operations are expected in 2023.

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THE INTERVIEW reNEWS

Today, SSE Renewables director of development Maria Ryan. **p4**

Wind acreage 'disappearing' in local authority blueprints

Acreage deemed suitable for onshore wind farm construction has decreased substantially in local authority development plans, WEI 2022 has heard.

Brian Keville, director of planning consultancy MKO, said "huge ground" has been lost in the strategic blueprints for county councils, many

of which are currently being updated.

He cited counties such as Galway and Kerry where recent redrafts have removed vast swathes of territory while others like Wexford have added no new acreage.

Keville said this suggests there is a divergence between European and national

priorities on the need for more renewables and local authority-level policy.

There was a golden opportunity to revamp individual county development plans after the 2019 Climate Action Plan was published but this has been lost, he added.

Keville said the problem

is unlikely to fix itself as local authorities are "highly political".

However, he pointed to the government's Climate Action Plan, which includes a pledge to publish regional roadmaps for development.

Keville claimed there is no clear timeline for this but said this work should be started immediately and completed by the end of next year.

Meanwhile, the government could introduce a fixed timeframe for An Bord Pleanála to make planning decisions, he said.

A ministerial order, which is provided for in permitting legislation, could be used and Keville suggested a 24-week timetable would be reasonable.

ABP is currently taking an average of 69 weeks to deal with strategic infrastructure projects, according to figures presented at the conference.



OBSTACLES: EU Commissioner Mairead McGuinness (above) called for a "frank conversation" on the obstacles facing the expansion of renewables on day two at the conference. The bloc's financial services chief pointed to permitting as among the key challenges for the sector.

"We need to have a frank conversation on what are the obstacles, how we can overcome them and more importantly to put a short timeline on when these obstacles can be overcome," she said.

McGuinness added that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made such a discussion more urgent.

Photo: reNEWS

Ireland 'needs offshore supply chain brains trust'

The government is being urged to bring together industry, state agencies and departments to unlock domestic supply chain growth associated with offshore wind.

Wind Energy Ireland made the call on day two of the conference after publishing a new position paper titled *Working Together: Building Ireland's Offshore Industry*.

The report identifies several significant challenges to Ireland's offshore wind sector including a lack of port

infrastructure, skills shortages and uncertainty about when projects will be able to start construction.

The paper calls for an Offshore Renewable Industry Forum, led by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, to agree and implement an action plan to support the development of a domestic offshore renewable energy industry.

The authors also ask for a review of the National Ports Policy to ensure it supports

the development of harbour infrastructure to enable the construction of offshore wind farms.

In addition, the paper says a high-level implementation group should be set up to deliver the recommendations listed in the Skills for Zero Carbon report to address domestic skills shortages.

Significant resources should be dedicated for floating wind R&D, and the development of green hydrogen and emerging offshore technologies.



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Headroom for green hydrogen exports

Floating offshore wind on Ireland's Atlantic coast could be a source of abundant cheap power to fuel electrolyzers, writes **Sara Verbruggen**

Ireland has the potential to establish itself as an exporter of green hydrogen, according to developers of the country's initial electrolyser projects.

Its wind resource could be tapped not only to further

decarbonise the electricity grid but also to produce the hydrogen to decarbonise the gas network.

Ireland has lifted its 2030 renewable electricity target to 80% from 70% in its 2021 Climate Action Plan.

"This is a big challenge but once we're there it is entirely possible to get to a point where renewables supply 90% of Ireland's electricity needs," said Bord na Mona renewables head John Reilly (right).

"The 10% balance can come from flexible gas, which can be decarbonised with green hydrogen. You could be looking at a net zero grid by 2040."

Producing excess renewable electricity, more than can be exported to the grid, has a "nice circularity", to produce green hydrogen to decarbonise fuels for aviation and heavy transport fuels and feed into the gas grid to provide seasonal storage, added Reilly, who addressed WEI 2022 on day two.

On the west coast capacity factors mean a megawatt of onshore wind can be produced at a third of the cost of North Sea offshore power, Reilly told reNEWS ahead of the conference.

Bord na Mona owns 80,000 hectares of land, which is more than is needed to accommodate turbines to produce electricity for the grid. The company's vision is to build wind farms to supply electrolyzers to produce green hydrogen that can

be fed into the gas network system.

Catherine Sheridan, chief operating officer at Irish green hydrogen developer EIH2, said offshore wind policy has been guided by decarbonising the grid with most activity taking place off the east coast.

An emphasis on "accelerating floating offshore wind" would open up more areas, including in the Atlantic, to generate cheap power at scale that could be used to produce green hydrogen, said Sheridan, who also addressed delegates in Dublin on day two.

Ireland, which has 70GW of offshore wind resource, can help to decarbonise the EU's energy supply within its own borders by establishing a green hydrogen economy that meets export as well as domestic demand, she added.

German Ambassador Cord Meier-Klodt and German-Irish Chamber of Industry & Commerce chief executive Ralf Lissek recently visited EIH2 and BnM to discuss plans for hydrogen projects and the role hydrogen can play in Europe's energy transition.

Germany has been "forward thinking" in its hydrogen ambitions but has realised it has far more requirement than can be met by its own renewable resources so it is exploring partnerships for importing. "Ireland can serve that need," said Reilly.

Reilly and Sheridan said first steps such as the green hydrogen strategy are key and they are encouraged by the government's draft policy.

"But you need to establish the push and pull. How do you launch hydrogen into the wider economy? What support mechanisms can be put in place that would incentivise hydrogen end-users such as heavy vehicle and bus fleets, for example, to switch to green fuel?" Reilly said.

Sheridan added: "There is now a clear need to develop green hydrogen activity in parallel with Ireland's increased renewables and grid decarbonisation ambition." ■



John Reilly (right).



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THE INTERVIEW reNEWS



Setting the scene for WEI 2022 senior industry figures talk to reNEWS about vital issues shaping the sector. Today it's the turn of SSE Renewables director of development **Maria Ryan** (left)

Q What is your main message for the Irish renewables sector at WEI 2022?

A It's a really exciting time to be working in an industry that is growing at such scale and pace, both at home and abroad, and there is a lot of work to be done in the face of some massive challenges. Gas prices, our dependence on fossil fuels, and the current uncertain geopolitical situation mean that energy security and energy independence have never been more urgent. Offshore wind will be key to protecting Ireland from those threats in the future. As a society in the midst of a climate crisis, Ireland needs to challenge itself to do even more so we shouldn't settle for 5GW of offshore wind by the end of the decade but rather see it as the minimum requirement.

Q How big a role can onshore wind/offshore wind play in the context of Irish energy security, and should the government increase 2030 targets?

A Ensuring a secure indigenous energy supply will be impossible without the large-scale deployment of offshore wind and the retention and growth of the onshore wind fleet. Much of the existing onshore fleet across the island is coming of

age and will soon need repowering or extension of life. It is essential that repowering and life extension projects are facilitated so the gains made through the development of onshore wind are retained. The phase one offshore projects that include SSE Renewables' Arklow Bank will be progressing at pace with the imminent opening of the Maritime Area Consent process in April, followed by a first O-RESS process opening for pre-qualification at the end of the year. Ireland absolutely needs to challenge itself to deliver more than is set out in the 2030 targets. 5GW of offshore wind needs to be the minimum requirement.

Q The financial difficulties being experienced in the renewables supply chain are well documented. What is the role of developers in ensuring there is a sustainable industry to support the delivery of wind projects?

A As a result of many factors such as the war in Ukraine and the pandemic, the cost of commodities is increasing. As developers we have an obligation not just to source suppliers based on cost but on myriad criteria such as sustainability and health and safety. We can also be clear as to what our plans and ambitions are, but that is something government can also help with. Clear

targets and timelines which are successfully delivered will drive confidence in the Irish market and enable supply chain companies to invest and grow their capability as well.

Q What are SSE Renewables' targets for onshore/offshore construction in Ireland this decade and what is the company's strategy for achieving this?

A SSE Renewables will continue to develop both onshore and offshore wind, both of which will significantly contribute to the decarbonisation of the electricity system. We have an extensive development portfolio and by 2030 we plan to deliver an additional 700MW of onshore wind, doubling our current onshore operational total, in addition to at least 2GW of offshore wind across three projects: Arklow Bank Wind Park 2, Braymore and Celtic Sea Array. We recently announced our decision to transfer Arklow Bank 2 from the Foreshore Act over to the Maritime Area Consent (MAC) process, which allows us to revise the project and substantially increase output from the site to 800MW. This means the project will be able to make an even more significant contribution to Ireland's climate action target of at least 5GW by 2030 and to Ireland's national and local economy.

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