



# Building Energy Independence for Ireland: **Priorities for 2024 Local and European Elections**



# Priorities for 2024 Local and European Elections

## About Wind Energy Ireland

Wind Energy Ireland represents Ireland's wind energy industry, working to promote wind energy as an essential, economical and environmentally friendly part of the country's low-carbon energy future.

Our more than 200 members have come together to plan, build, operate and support the development of the country's chief renewable energy resource.

We create jobs, invest in communities and reduce carbon emissions. We work to end Ireland's dependency on imported fossil fuels. We are leaders in Ireland's response to the climate emergency.

## Introduction from Wind Energy Ireland CEO, Noel Cunniffe

The climate emergency is one of the most pressing challenges facing governments today and the effects of the crisis are changing how we live, work and plan for the future.

We are seeing average rainfall increasing and record-breaking summer temperatures. Climate change means more heatwaves, more droughts and more flooding. On the other hand, the excessive reliance on imported fossil fuels has clearly exposed our vulnerability to high international energy prices.

Irish people know this. They want to accelerate the pace of decarbonisation. Communities and businesses alike want affordable, clean energy and the peace of mind that energy security brings.

Candidates for County & City Councils and for the European Parliament have the opportunity to play critical leadership roles in supporting our energy transition.

We must support our renewable energy industry to provide clean energy that will not only bring down the cost of our energy bills but also create job opportunities and boost our local economies.

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For **European Election Priorities** go to **page 6**.



## Supporting local communities

Irish wind farms are proud to pay more than €50 million every year in rates to local County Councils and this figure is growing every year. In six counties – Cavan, Kerry, Leitrim, Offaly, Roscommon and Tipperary – our wind farms provide more than 10 per cent of the county's entire commercial rates income.

These funds encourages thriving communities, support local sports clubs, keep libraries opening and alleviate the rates burden on local businesses.

Our elected representatives in local government can support climate action at a local and regional level. Their responsibilities will grow as Local Authority Climate Action Plans are implemented.

Our County Councils can help to ensure that the foundations are in place not only to help us meet our climate targets, but to help develop a cleaner and more secure future for our families and our communities across Ireland.

### Wind Energy Ireland priorities for 2024 Local Elections

We are calling for local government candidates to be ambitious with their vision for the long-term growth and prosperity of Ireland's energy future, and to:

#### 1. Help accelerate the development of clean, affordable energy for Ireland:

- a. Ensure County Development Plans (CDPs) support national policy on climate action by zoning enough suitable areas for wind farm development to achieve the targets set out in the Climate Action Plan.
- b. Strengthen our planning system by hiring more planners and ecologists for local authority planning teams to help assess renewable energy projects.
- c. Prioritise repowering and life-extension of existing wind farms in local CDPs and Climate Action Plans (CAPs) to ensure we do not lose hundreds of MW of installed capacity.
- d. Support and invest in port and harbour infrastructure to enable the development of offshore wind energy and to maximise benefits to coastal communities.



**2. Work with local education providers to promote skills opportunities in the renewable energy sector:**

- a. Support the development of training and education initiatives, particularly in the ETB sector, to promote the renewable energy industry to school leavers and those returning to work after a career break or looking to change careers.

**3. Support the development of Ireland's electricity infrastructure to decarbonise our communities:**

- a. Support the reinforcement of our electricity grid in line with EirGrid's Shaping Our Electricity Future and particularly the North-South Interconnector. Reinforcing the grid, and building new grid, must be understood as a national priority.
- b. Prioritise the delivery of local electrical vehicle charging infrastructure in Local Authority Climate Action Plans to help reduce transport emissions.
- c. Work to electrify the County Council's transport fleet as quickly as possible.



## Working together in Europe

The development of a thriving wind energy sector in Ireland cannot be achieved by local and national politics alone – an energy secure and independent Ireland must be at the heart of an energy independent and competitive Europe.

The next five years in the European Parliament will be critical to improving our planning laws, to strengthening our electricity grid, to designing a new electricity market and to protecting from unfair competition a strategic European industry that supports tens of thousands of jobs.

Our MEPs can work with our own Government and the EU Commission to ensure that we do not just decarbonise Ireland but, as a potential net exporter of clean energy, that we play our part in building a more sustainable and competitive European Union.

Working together, we can build a future with cleaner air and thousands of green jobs in revitalised rural and coastal communities. We can build an Ireland, a Europe, where we have evolved beyond fossil fuels to our clean energy future.





A photograph of several wind turbines silhouetted against a sunset sky with orange and yellow clouds. The turbines are positioned across the top of the page, with the sea and a sandy beach visible in the lower right.

# Wind Energy Ireland priorities for 2024 European Elections

We are calling for candidates for the European Parliament to work with the Irish Government and with all of those in Europe who want to see an end to the EU's dependency on imported fossil fuels to:

## 1. Reform Europe's planning laws to accelerate delivery of wind energy:

- a. Support the political ambitions of REPowerEU and support the implementation of the EU's Renewable Energy Directive III at national level, particularly the delivery of renewable acceleration areas.
- b. Advocate for the speedy implementation of new EU rules for wind energy permitting: tighter deadlines, a one-stop-shop, overriding public interest – and all done digitally.

## 2. Support electrification and a strong Irish and European electricity grid:

- a. Invest massively in electricity grids – with better top-down planning and more private finance, leveraged by the European Investment Bank.
- b. Publicly and loudly call for support for the North-South Interconnector.
- c. Help industry electrify in line with the ambitions set by the Commission Communication on the 2040 Climate Targets and the Antwerp Declaration. Call for strategic financial support and more flexible State aid rules to effectively electrify industries such as food & drink and pharmaceuticals and ensure a more sustainable and competitive economy. Ensure the transport sector across, EVs, bus and rail, can accelerate electrification and displace fossil fuels. We need to help them decarbonise with finance and flexible State aid.
- d. Call upon the new Commission to develop an Electrification Action Plan aiming for 35 per cent electricity in the energy mix by 2030 (up from 23 per cent today) in line with the EU net-zero ambitions.

### 3. Protect the European renewable energy industry

- a. Ensure a level playing field for Europe's clean tech manufacturing. Advocate for the use all existing EU tools to ensure fair competition in the wind turbine market. Help set clear minimum standards on cyber and data security, responsible business conduct and supply chain resilience.
- b. Support an increased focus on innovation scale-up in the upcoming revision of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework to support the industrial deployment of new green technologies.

### 4. Support the Irish wind energy industry in Europe

- a. Advocate for the allocation of funding under Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), IPCIs and relevant EU funding instruments to support strategic port development to facilitate construction and operational phases and ensure Irish offshore wind farms are built, operated and maintained from Irish ports and harbours.
- b. Advocate to ensure that Ireland receives a decision on State aid approval in 2025 to continue running the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS), or a new support scheme, for onshore and offshore wind projects beyond 2025.
- c. Engage with the Irish Government to gain their commitment to seek the energy portfolio for the appointed Irish Commissioner in the new EU Commission.





[www.windenergyireland.com](http://www.windenergyireland.com)

[office@windenergyireland.com](mailto:office@windenergyireland.com)