

UK announces 25GW of Offshore Wind Energy – Ireland yet to get out of blocks NOW Ireland calls for immediate Cost Benefit Analysis on Offshore Wind

NOW Ireland, The National Offshore Wind Association of Ireland has welcomed the UK Government's plan to develop a further 25GW of energy through offshore wind by 2020 in addition to the 8GW already planned, but claimed the announcement provided a stark reminder of Ireland's failure to focus on how we are going to reach our renewables target.

The UK Governments announcement, made today by Energy Secretary John Hutton, will put in place a framework through which there can be a substantial roll out of offshore projects in the UK. The new target of 33GW of offshore generation would be sufficient to power every home in the UK and would help to ensure that all emissions targets were met on schedule. According to current EU figures Ireland is likely to miss our emissions targets by up to 100%.

Commenting on today's announcement, Torben Andersen of NOW Ireland indicated that Ireland is falling further behind our EU neighbours in terms of addressing our renewables target.

"The UK announcement is only one of a number of recent announcements by major European Governments, with Germany, Denmark and Sweden all making further commitments in terms of developing their offshore capacity. Offshore wind energy is now a mainstream power generation source delivering secure supply of electricity. In the case of Germany, this decision was based on a detailed cost-benefit analysis which showed a long term saving to the taxpayer through offshore wind deployment.

While last weeks budget was extremely disappointing in its failure to give any real impetus to the challenge of addressing our dependency on fossil fuels, there is still an opportunity to address this. Ireland has the benefit of some the most impressive wind resources in the world – equal in potential to those in the UK, yet they remain largely undeveloped. NOW Ireland is calling on the Government to examine the potential of offshore wind and carry out a full cost-benefit analysis leading, if successful to a commitment to support the deployment of offshore wind energy technology in Ireland.

Offshore wind is now recognised throughout Europe as the one clean renewable power source that is capable of delivering capacity close to that of fossil-fuel based generation. Ireland has the capacity from current leases to deliver over 2000MW of power, with potential for another 4000MW in un-licensed waters. Private investment of over €4bn is planned in this sector, but with no guidance from Government, this investment remains locked.

With the United Kingdom seeking to develop such a level of generation, the potential exists in Ireland not only to develop similar resources, but also develop jobs based in industries supporting this new energy resource. Ireland can be a centre of green energy excellence, but only if we prove that we are committed to achieving our own energy targets. Ireland has fallen behind our EU partners, now it is time to take the lead."

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About NOW Ireland

NOW Ireland is the representative body for the Irish Offshore Wind Energy sector. It's membership includes Ireland's five offshore wind operators Airtricity, Saorgus Energy Limited, Eco Wind Power Limited, Oriel Windfarm Limited and Fuinneamh Sceirde Teo, in addition to other companies who provide services to this rapidly developing sector. At present the industry has a proposed investment level of €4bn, with a potential generating capacity of 2000mw from existing lease areas off the Irish coast.