



BirdWatch Ireland Policy Statement on Windfarms

BirdWatch Ireland supports the production of energy from wind where windfarms are sensitively located. Windfarms do not contribute to global warming or acid rain production and have fewer environmental impacts than many other forms of renewable energy. However, windfarms can impact birds through collision with turbines, disturbance and habitat loss. It is critical that windfarms are located at appropriate sites. The government should adopt a strategic approach to identifying suitable windfarm sites. The 2002 policy takes account of the previous 2000 policy and replaces it.

Policy Objectives

- There should be a presumption against siting windfarms in or adjacent to sensitive ecological sites, including IBAs, SPAs, SACs and NHAs.
- There is an urgent need to identify and designate Natura 2000 sites in offshore areas and to complete designation of the Natura 2000 network on land.
- A full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) should be undertaken by the Government for the wind energy programme in Ireland identifying areas important for nature conservation where development should be avoided.
- A SEA should include indicative mapping of bird populations, their habitats, flyways and migration routes in order to provide a structure to decision making.
- Baseline data and post-construction monitoring needs to be established in order to determine future impacts and inform Environmental Impact Assessment Procedures.
- In offshore and onshore environments, all wind energy projects should be subject to a full EIS until adequate information and sufficient baseline data exists.
- DoCMNR and DoHELG should develop clearer guidelines for the content, structure and research necessary to complete the required Environmental Impact Assessments.
- Reform of the foreshore licensing Acts 1993 and 1999 should be undertaken to create a mechanism for appeals to licensing and leasing decisions.
- Further resources should be allocated to Dúchas in order that the regulatory system functions effectively and applications are thoroughly screened for their likely ecological impacts.
- Incentives should be provided for windfarm developments in areas other than the coast and uplands where environmental impacts are likely to be less. Such areas could include intensive farmland and disused industrial areas.

*Policy 02-05
November 2002*