

Submission NO: 152



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Development Plan Review,
The Planning Department,
Clare County Council,
New Road,
Ennis,
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V95 DXP2

Monday November 16th 2020

Re: Submission to Clare County Development Plan review

A Chara,

I wish to make a submission to the current review of the Clare County Development plan. I have set out below some issues which I believe are of some importance and require your consideration as you begin your work. I would be grateful if you could keep me informed as you progress through this process as I may like to make further submissions or observations based on the next draft of the document.

Moneypoint

Co. Clare has played a very significant role in the generation of electricity, to meet the needs of a growing and emerging economy, right back to the 1920's when the state-built the Shannon scheme at Ardnacrusha to harness the power of the River Shannon. In the mid-

eighties the ESB opened Irelands largest power generating station again on the River Shannon but this time down river on the Estuary.

As the decades have passed, and the harmful effects of carbon emissions are more fully understood, the burning of coal at Moneypoint is no longer considered acceptable or viable.

This evolution is having a very serious impact to the social, economic, and cultural life in the west of our county. Population decline will continue unless a significant strategic approach is taken to address the lack of employment opportunities in the area.

Renewable Energy offshore

The council should put in place the policies necessary in the forthcoming County Development plan to encourage investment in the capture of wind energy off the Clare coastline.

Technologies for this industry are at the development stage, and as such this creates the potential for Co. Clare to get involved early in the development cycle. If successful, this could lead to Clare being the location for the manufacture of the equipment to be used offshore. Additionally, there is very significant opportunities for Clare to become a hub for the manufacture of this equipment for export. The critical point is that Clare needs to be ready and have the appropriate policies in place to attract the investment and the companies with the plans to capture offshore wind energy.

Enterprise Hubs

The development of a number of enterprise hubs around the county has been a major success and has supported the desire of many individuals to participate in remote working, reducing commuting time, improving work life balance & quality of life and benefiting the environment through reduced carbon emissions. This policy should be continued, and plans should be made to develop similar facilities at key locations around the county.

Broadband and mobile coverage

Telecommunication companies regularly cite issues with local authorities as an excuse for the delay in rolling out improved coverage of broadband and mobile coverage. To ensure that this is not an issue in Clare it would be beneficial to review the situation as part of this development plan.

Tourism

Greenway – Wild Atlantic Way - Outdoor Activities

As we plan for the years ahead, we need to understand better what product the tourist will require for the coming years. Is clear now that outdoor activity including walking cycling and outdoor activities will continue to be an area of significant growth. The evidence from the Wild Atlantic way project together with the success of greenways should inform the policies to be adopted for the next five years so that our county continues to benefit from this opportunity

Water & Sewage upgrade

It's clear that villages can play an important part in providing the accommodation necessary to facilitate these tourists however the lack of appropriate water and wastewater facilities is hindering the growth in areas such as Broadford, Carrigaholt, Doolin and Cooraclare amongst others. Policy solutions can and should be addressed in the plan.

Holy Island

The purchase of Holy Island on Lough Derg was a significant positive intervention by the Council in broadening the Tourism potential in the East of the County. The council now needs to develop the attraction as a visitor site and construct a visitor centre at Mountshannon. To harness the full potential of this wonderful site the council needs to put in place the policies necessary to ensure the development takes place and appropriate linkage to the Blueway project.

Forest park tourist facility

The development of the "Center Parcs" forest holiday destination in Longford has been a major success story and one which I believe could be recreated in Clare. There is no shortage of scenic areas with lakes and forests in abundance through the county. Proximity to an international airport and good access to the motor way network should make a suitable site a viable driver of economic activity for Clare. As part of this process I believe the council should identify and zone a suitable site to facilitate the develop a similar facility.

Shannon Airport

Shannon airport has been a major economic driver for business and tourism in the Midwest since the late 40's. While the industrial zone around Shannon has continued to be successful, grown and kept pace with the many changes over the years the airport has struggled to keep pace with competition from Dublin and Cork airports. The council in its forward planning needs to identify strategic sites near the airport that would accommodate a major tourism attraction to complement the offering by Shannon Heritage at Bunratty. Consideration should also be given to zoning a site suitable to accommodate a regional conference centre.

Rural Villages / Housing

The core of many villages and smaller towns throughout county Clare are falling into dereliction. There are many reasons for this, but it should be for the council to set out a strategy for the upgrade repair and re-habitation of these vacant premises. It seems to me that its rather ironic to have a national policy for village renewal to address this dereliction while at the same time the council buy land and build a scheme of houses on the outskirts of a village. The social housing need in rural villages and towns can be addressed in the first instance by the council buying vacant and derelict properties, if necessary, through compulsory purchase order and then repairing and upgrading such properties.

Onshore wind - impact on Tourism and rural life.

The increase in wind turbines dotted across the rural landscape is having a very negative impact on the ability of some dwellers to enjoy the amenity of their homes and surrounding landscape. Additionally, it is impacting significantly the tourism experience of those that visit the county to enjoy the scenic routes and those who come to enjoy walking and cycling in the remote parts. Its my view that we're at a tipping point and if we fail to halt the continued expansion of on shore wind turbine development the existing and future tourism potential will be irreparably damaged. For this reason, I suggest the council adopt policies that restrict onshore wind turbine development to the sites currently constructed and ensure that from now on all wind energy development in Clare take place offshore.

Thank you for your consideration of the above, and should you require any further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Timmy Dooley

Sen. Timmy Dooley