

Press Release

Donegal is a great place to do business if you are a wind farm developer. The Council does not charge the Development Contribution Scheme. Every other Council in Ireland charges it. So what is going on in Donegal?

The Council says that they have Special Charges that wind farm developers have to pay. But this information is nowhere to be seen on any Council website. Their Development Contribution Scheme policy is silent on wind farms. No stated exemption, no statement of Special Charges. Why the lack of transparency?

The Council says that the Special Charges cover work to local roads and infrastructure. But the public is not allowed to see these, or be part of any consultation on them, as they are confidential. The Council claims this takes the place of the Development Contribution Scheme. Do the charges cover the necessary work that the developer would be doing anyway? If they replace the Contribution Scheme how much is over and above the necessary work? Is it on a par with other Councils Contribution Schemes?

The Crockbrack Hill wind farm in Inishowen, north Donegal will have two turbines. At the Wexford County Council charges of €18,000 per turbine the developer should be paying €36,000. How can the people of Inishowen find out what is actually being paid?

If these figures were applied to the 231 wind turbines already built in Donegal the Council could have charged €4,158,000 under the Development Contribution Scheme. Did they collect the equivalent under the mysterious, not to be seen Special Charges?

An Bord Pleanála puts the Condition of paying in to the Development Contribution Scheme in their judgements. When An Bord Pleanála is the final arbiter on planning and what they so goes, how come Donegal Council can send the developer at Crockbrack Hill a letter that states:

'the current Donegal County Council Development Contribution Scheme does not make provision for contributions payable in respect of wind energy development.' (31st January 2014).

Who then is the final arbiter?

One local resident said: "Ordinary people pay into Contribution Scheme when building their own homes and pay the Green Levy in their electricity bills. People's houses that are near wind farms can lose between 10 and 20% of their value. Not to mention the impacts on sleep and health. And the destruction of our beautiful, wild countryside. We are giving them money and they are making millions in profit. The developers get paid even when the turbines are not generating any electricity. Wind farm developers give little or nothing to the communities in Donegal, either in the Development Contribution Scheme or through Community Benefit. How can this be fair? I can see why the IFA want in on the act. Donegal Council needs to come clean and tell us the figures. And they urgently need to review their policy!"

**Prepared by Inishowen Wind Energy Awareness Group, September 2015.
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