

## **Alternative Energy Regulation - Guidelines Are Needed Now**

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IT'S a quarter of a century since the Ireland's first windfarm was established at Bellacorrick in Mayo yet we do not have the kind of guidelines for these projects — or solar energy projects either — that inspires confidence or, more importantly, trust in our planning process.

The issue came to the fore again, at a meeting of Cork County Council yesterday, when it was pointed out that under legislation the noise generated by a windfarm cannot be assessed until a project is complete.

This seems an only-in-Ireland silliness because if one turbine breaks noise limits surely an entire, completed windfarm will do so as well?

Does that mean an offending windfarm will be dismantled or left idle?

Right, yeah," as we say in the vernacular.

This lacuna seems very helpful to the promoters of the heavily subsidised wind energy sector and it may be coincidental but it should be resolved.

It is incontestable that we need to develop ever-more sources of renewable energy but is on-shore wind really viable in Ireland?

Windfarms generate around 12% of our electricity but only 4% of our total energy needs.

These seem paltry returns in the context of the investment made and the challenges faced by host communities.

It is time for guidelines for all renewable energy projects.

It is also time to move windfarms off-shore to facilitate the kind of scale commensurate with tomorrow's challenges.