

Wind power has saved €1bn in fuel costs, SEAI explains

Dan Keenan

Wind power has saved [Ireland](#) more than €1 billion in imported energy costs, cut greenhouse gas emissions and has not added to customers' energy bills, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland has said. "The evidence today is that renewable energy is working for Ireland and is bringing significant environmental and economic benefits," said

[Brian Motherway](#)

, the authority's chief executive, ahead of the publication of the renewable energy report for 2014 yesterday.

Ireland's wind profile provided a plentiful renewable resource which also had great potential for export, he said. "More than €1 billion has stayed in the Irish economy which would otherwise have left to import fossil fuels from other countries."

He said renewable energy sources were being tapped "in a way which did not add to consumer prices".

Dr Motherway added: "Wind [power], if anything lowers prices when gas prices are high. Wind is a uniquely rich resource, it's plentiful and it's cheap and we should continue to exploit it."

Asked if more and more turbines would scar the countryside, he said: "There are places we shouldn't put turbines and other places which are perfectly acceptable. There are remote places and depleted bogs which people are looking at. We should remember that there are a couple of hundred wind farms out there already which are side by side with communities in harmony. We hear about the bad cases but we don't hear about the good cases."

Good planning and consultation was the answer, he said, insisting that the Irish planning system was up to the task of maximising wind resources while protecting communities and the countryside. "The planning system has shown itself capable of deciding where wind farms can and cannot go."

"Wind is our strong resource," he added. "Where else are we going to get our energy in the future? But it does mean putting up wind turbines and we have to find ways in which that is acceptable without throwing out the benefits that are available to us."

The potential to export energy generated in Ireland to Britain was a "tremendous opportunity," he said. "We still have to go through all the processes of an intergovernmental agreement . . . we are a long way from knowing where wind turbines might go with export in mind . . . if we can do it right, it's a great opportunity."

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The Government was committed to renewable energy, he said, “and realises that this is a great economic opportunity for Ireland. It’s a fantastic resource for us . . . Why wouldn’t we exploit it?”

Source: The Irish Times