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### Submission on Community Benefit Fund of Offshore Windfarm ORESS Consultation

Windfarms encounter local resistance in very many communities, including loud campaigns against them in Wicklow and other counties. Previous thermal power stations had major local benefits including jobs, trade, substantial rates to provide local services and giving the communities a sense of purpose. This is lacking in offshore wind which will provide few jobs, except where the base is, but will have a large visual effect on a wide area. Communities need to feel connected to it, need to see the benefit locally from the particular wind farm and be persuaded to accept it, even like it. A sense of ownership not imposition is needed.

This is best done through local involvement especially in the early stages through the planning and building phases. A nationally administered fund won't have this local involvement.

The main benefit of the wind farms is providing carbon free electricity at a reasonable price. The CBF is to provide local involvement and acceptance of it. It should be spent on things that promote that in the community and not spent meeting other national goals. Most of it should be spent in areas that can see the turbines and the funds from each wind farm should be seen to be spent in those areas with proper accounts published yearly of the spend by small geographic area, such as Municipal Districts.

The 'Development Levies' paid on new buildings are paid to the Council but are not restricted, nor accounted within the area of building. Thus a considerable amount of Development Levies collected in Greystones, where there is lots of development, is spent in West Wicklow where there is little development. The concept was that they were to provide services for the developments and new residents but this has been subverted. This problem must be guarded against with the CBF.

Greystones is due to have 2 or 3 of the largest windfarms in Ireland meeting off its shore. These may be 310m high, compared to Bray Head 240m, occupying most of the sea horizon this will be visually intrusive. The best people to get positive acceptance of this are the promoters in conjunction with locally knowledgeable people such as the local Municipal District Clerk, the Council and community organisations. Benefit must be seen to come from a particular windfarm. A centrally administered fund would be very poor at this. Later on when it is up and running for say 10 years this could be changed. Initial CBF expenditure, from well before operation to say year 2 of operation, should be written off over the first 5 years of CBF Revenue.

#### My Experience.

I led the project to rebuild Greystones Harbour, the first harbour constructed on the open coast since independence, the last being Rosslare Harbour in 1906. I devised the initial pre-statutory consultation with Council officials helping: Think Tanks about the design & visual aspect involving many local organisations, lectures on coastal engineering (attended by about 1,000 people), leaflets etc. Significant details were then included in the Town Development Plan by Councillors vote, with people being aware of the compromises needed and the local benefit. This local education & local involvement was vital for retaining local public support for a contentious marine project.

I represent Greystones, Kilcoole & Newcastle with about 30,000 population, most of whom will see the turbines. About 1,000 people use boats for leisure. 500 or more swim in the sea regularly and 1,000s walk beside it. About 5 people, including skipper & crew, are

commercial fishers. If there are State Aid issues with fishers then it would be best to deal with them separately, as a separate part of the fund, as the needs of this very small group should not distort the CBF for the local population.

The East Coast wind farms are near the centres of demand for electricity and thus economical. Consequently they are near to and will be seen by large numbers of people unlike most on shore ones which are remote. The uses of the CBF need to reflect the large scale of communities.

Uses of CBF. This seems to be ignored by the document:

- Assistance with various sport. youth & local clubs of all types.
- An Interpretive Centre to explain issues, an educational centre for schools & also a tourist centre to show the town is helping in the no carbon transition. I visited the Rampion visitors Centre in Brighton, UK which was a good example in a similar socio economic place to Greystones,
- Trips, subsidised, out to see its construction and possibly its subsequent operation. People are not very knowledgeable about the sea but are curious about marine things. They were interested in the survey boats in the harbour.
- Telescopes at places on the sea front with explanation boards.
- Public Realm improvements especially along the sea front. Walks, bathing huts, facilities for walkers/swimmers/leisure boat people.
- Improvements in the Environment including improving knowledge & facilities for birdwatching.
- Cultural facilities

Most of these will be needed up front at the planning stage.

Questions in 1.6.

1. Projects should make contributions from Planning Approval date probably at a lesser rate until operational. It is very important the some pre-approval expenditure is offset able for education & community liaison.
3. Early contributions should be 50% or less.
5. A nationally managed fund will result in much greater public opposition to these visually intrusive projects. Benefits must be local and seen to be. As described above. Benefits for the very small number of fishers, which may have State Aid issues, could be dealt with nationally but accounted for locally.
6. It must be seen to come from a particular wind farm and expenditure accounted for by Municipal District. Elsewhere I identify the types of items that should be funded by the CBF especially those needed to get community buy in.

Ends.