



**Press Release**  
**28 January 2009**

## **Ireland will lose out on massive wind energy opportunity unless prompt action taken**

**Government should seek to attract wind turbine manufacturers and create  
thousands of jobs here**

***€8 billion to be spent on importing turbines here over decade***

The Irish Government and IDA should establish a special unit to attract a global wind turbine manufacturer here, prevent an €8 billion domestic spend on turbines over next 10 years from going abroad and create thousands of jobs in the process, leading academic and energy expert Dr Ed Walsh has stated.

Announcing his appointment to the board of innovative renewable energy company Wind Energy Direct, Dr Walsh said that we need to act fast so that the fast growing industry does not by-pass us despite Ireland being a natural fit as an international centre of excellence in the wind turbine sector. In addition to the €8 billion on importing and installing turbines in Ireland over the next 10 years, a further €1 billion per annum will be spent on maintaining them, he revealed.

“Across Europe there are 150,000 people employed in the wind energy sector and just 1% percent of those are in Ireland. Considering, along with Scotland, we have the highest wind speeds in Europe, this is a really miserable performance and it is clear that so far we have failed to capitalise on one of our finest natural resources.

“If we compare Ireland’s performance in this sector with Denmark’s, it is clear that we are really in the little league. Denmark, which has a population of 4.5 million but an average wind speed considerably less than Ireland’s, is far and away the world leader in terms of wind energy. Their wind turbine industry employs 20,000 people, has an annual turn-over of around €3 billion and

Danish company Vesta are the largest turbine manufacturing company in the world, with over 15,000 people alone.

“Germany is also a very significant player, with three manufacturers – Enercon, Siemens and Nordex – in the top ten manufacturers in the world and then you have GE Energy in the States, which is the second largest in world. When you consider that Denmark’s corporation tax rate is double ours, Germany’s is more than double and the US rate is also considerably more than ours, you begin to realise how we have missed out on a huge opportunity in recent years but we have not entirely missed the boat. The move to clean energy is intensifying dramatically, not least in the US, and we should now try and capitalise on this to make sure Ireland takes a deserved slice of the growing industry.

“Ireland really should be a recognised global market leader in this space and achieving that will also not happen without investing heavily in research to create new technologies and efficiencies for the sector globally. Right now, however, there is a huge opportunity in manufacturing turbines and it is amazing that Ireland is not in this space. Global manufactures of wind turbines, at current outputs, will simply not be able to keep up with the demand and our Government/IDA should right now be kicking down their doors and offering whatever incentives they can on top of our corporation tax rates to attract them here.

“Aside from not wanting to see €8 billion spent on importing wind turbines over the 10 years and €1 billion annually on maintaining our turbine stock, there is also a very significant export market to take advantage of. It would not be easy to attract these manufacturers here but there are many advantages for them to locate in Ireland. I am not sure we have made any worthwhile attempt to attract them here and we now risk watching one of our greatest opportunities by-pass us and at a time when we need it most.”

Dr Walsh also stated that the recent proposal from the European Commission to provide €100 million to build an electricity interconnector between Ireland and Britain should redouble Government efforts to capitalise on our wind resources given there is going to be an export facility for energy in place for the future.

**Ends**

## **Notes to Editors**

### **Wind Energy Direct (WED)**

Wind Energy Direct Ltd (WED) is a wholly Irish owned renewable energy company. WED's normal business model sees WED finance, build, own and operate the wind turbines via a turnkey solution. WED then sells the energy to our on-site clients at a significant discount to the retail rate. There is no capital outlay for the client. Suitable operations for WED installations include large manufacturing operations, data centres, hospitals and companies with large heat or refrigeration requirements. Surplus power may also be exported to the national electricity grid, utilising connections already in place to a customer's premises and underpinning savings arising from the project.

WED Board members include University of Limerick President Emeritus Ed Walsh and Lawrence Staudt, who heads the Centre for Renewable Energy at Dundalk Institute of Technology and pioneered the installation of the world's very first large commercial wind turbine on a college campus at Dundalk Institute of Technology.

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