



<https://www.pinterest.ie/pin/22377329369614143/>

Don't Fear the Wind

Can community owned wind farms overcome the stigmas surrounding wind energy?

by: Connor McGookin

Since 2002, the installed wind generation capacity in Ireland has increased from 145 MW to 2,878 MW at the end of 2017. Driven by the EU renewable energy targets, predominately being met by wind generation, which accounted [for 22% of electricity produced last year](#). In terms of penetration levels, this puts Ireland wind capacity in contention for [2nd place globally](#). Looking at these numbers, the growth of wind energy appears to have been a great success. However, behind the senses there is a slightly different story. While 72% of the public [surveyed by RTÉ](#) as part of Science Week 2017 are in favour, the remaining 28% have a rather negative opinion.

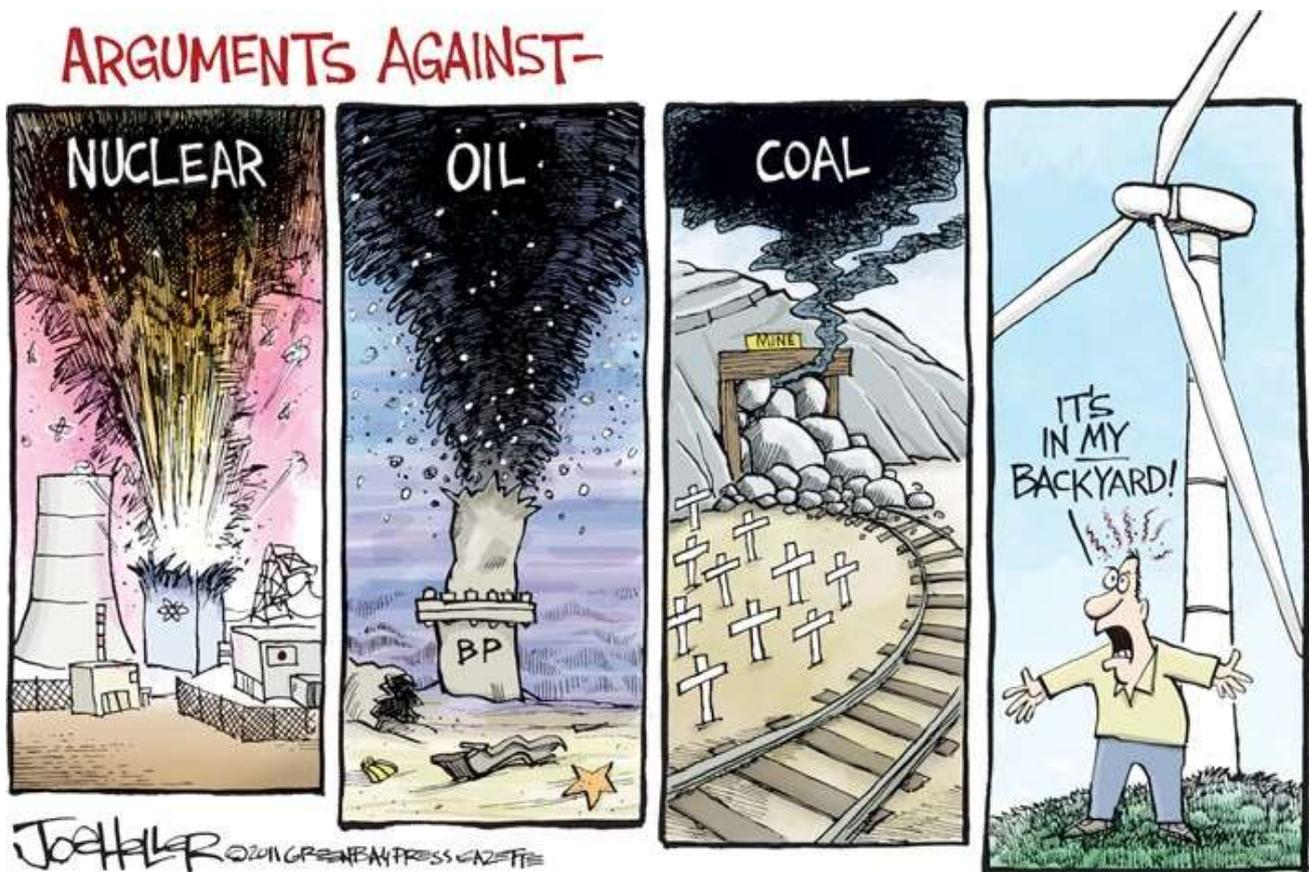
This has led to the foundation of almost 50 lobbying groups nationwide, unified through [Wind Aware Ireland](#). In 2014, submissions from 7,497 individuals and organisations were received in response to the [public consultation on the revision of the 2006 Wind Energy](#)

[Development Guidelines](#) in relation to noise, setbacks and shadow flicker. This is really quite a staggering number, when you consider that only 137 submissions were received during the [public consultation on Universal Health Insurance](#).

Let's look at some of the most common objections.

1) Wind Turbines are an ugly eye sore

Concern – Probably the most common complaint, *"I do not want these things destroying my scenic view"*, usually referred to as "[not in my backyard](#)" opposition. This is often backed by the argument that property values will fall.



<http://jeffreyhill.typepad.com/english/2011/03/cartoon-not-in-my-back-yard.html#.WiAsJUpl-Uk>

Unfortunately, existing research and commentary on this issue is widely varied and inconclusive, as can be seen in the table below [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]. Personally, I get excited by wind farms but to others the sight may appear an eyesore when compared to flowing hills. However, if these people were to personally benefit from the development, would their perception change? Furthermore, might this actually increase the value of properties as part of a sustainable community?

Country	Report	Conclusion
US	A Spatial Hedonic Analysis of the Effects of Wind Energy Facilities on Surrounding Property Values in the United States, August 2013 [1]	"no statistical evidence that home prices near wind turbines were affected"
UK	Gone with the wind: valuing the local impacts of wind turbines through house prices, November 2013 [2]	"wind farms reduce house prices in postcodes where the turbines are visible"
	The effect of wind farms on house prices, March 2014 [3]	"no evidence to suggest that there was a long-term negative impact on house prices"
Germany	The Impact of Wind Farms on Property Values: A Geographically Weighted Hedonic Pricing Model, March 2013 [4]	"there is statistical evidence for a negative impact of wind farm proximity"
Australia	Review of the Impact of Wind Farms on Property Values, July 2016 [5]	"unlikely to have a measurable negative impact on surrounding land value"

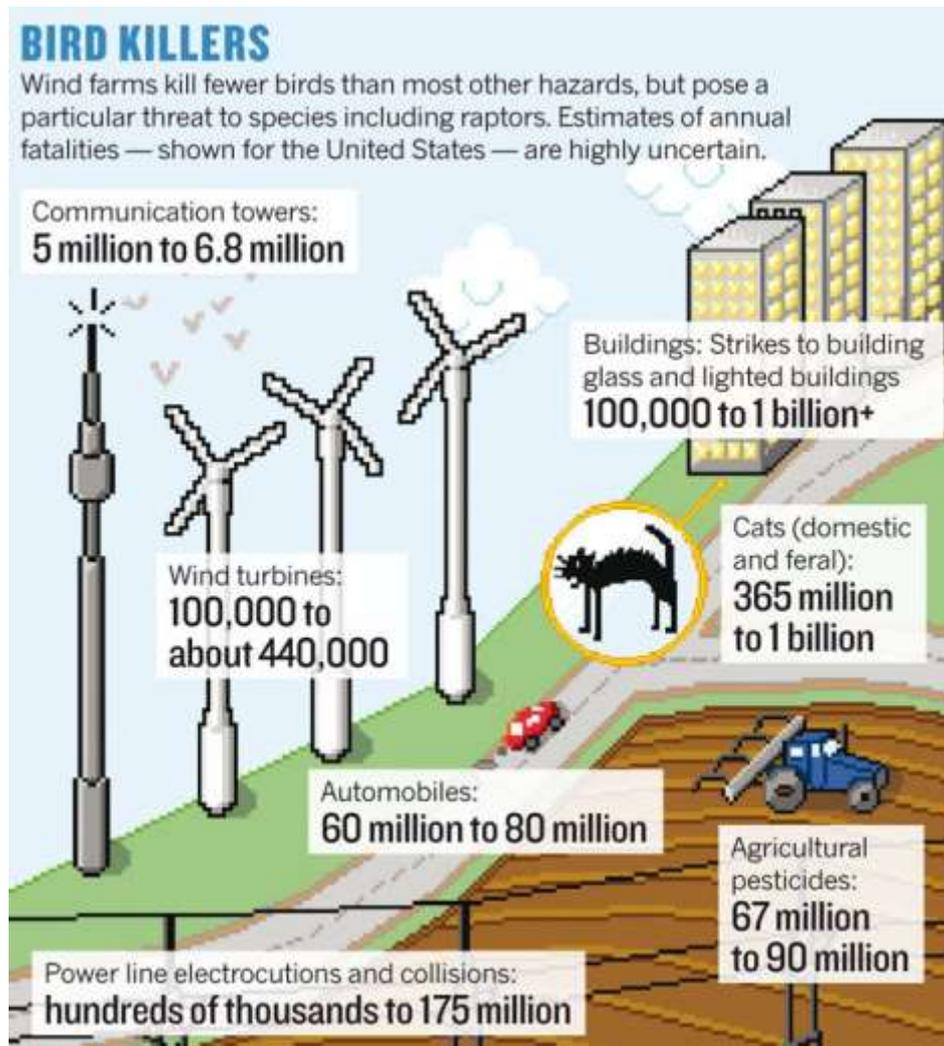
2) Wind Turbines destroy local ecology

Concern – On-shore wind farms require the destruction of "untouched" rural landscapes. This not only poses a threat to birds and bats from the turbine blades but the construction also requires the clearing of foliage and nesting habitat.



<http://www.epaw.org/documents.php?article=b11>

However, according to a study by the [US Fish and Wildlife Service](#), the threat posed by wind turbines to birds is considerably less than other manmade structures. In the UK, the [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds \(RSPB\)](#) says it supports wind power – not because windfarms pose a lower risk to birds than other energy sources – but because in its view climate change poses the "single greatest long-term threat" to bird species.



[A. Manville, US Fish and Wildlife Service](#)

3) Wind turbines are damaging to public health

Concern - The most commonly reported issue is infrasound, a sub-audible wave that may be directly harmful to public health. According to a paper published by the [Washington University School of Medicine](#), this can cause "disequilibrium (like seasickness, but not induced by movement), tinnitus, a sensation of fullness in the ear and worst of all, disturb

30% financial share for the local community" across a range of renewable sources. While I agree this is certainly a step in the right direction, I think there is a need to go further, following the example of the [Templederry](#) wind farm in Co. Tipperary, and give communities full ownership.

This could help address the above concerns, generating a positive narrative for wind energy in Ireland. Empowering communities to take ownership of wind farms (and other renewable energy developments), would make them a matter of local pride. Along with the added benefit of transitioning, the community from energy consumers to "prosumers". This may encourage habitual changes, key to the transition, such as increased awareness of energy use coupled with reduced consumption.

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