

ENGAGEMENT ON WIND ENERGY IS COMPULSORY

Proposals contained in the recently-published draft approach to update the Wind Energy Development Guidelines, which make community engagement compulsory on wind projects, will benefit local authorities, developers and the public and will significantly cut down on planning delays, according to leading consulting engineering and environmental scientists.

David McHugh, Operations Director of Fehily Timoney & Co (consulting engineering and environmental scientists) says that such a departure is overdue and that the 50-strong firm has built up an expert team of staff specialising in community engagement that includes scientists, planners and environmental consultants with unrivalled communication skills.

Fehily Timoney has already proven just how vital and beneficial community engagement is across solar, wind, waste management projects and more – not just for clients but for communities who need to better understand new technology and its potential impact.

Eliminating the fear factor and including community enhancement elements in projects - such as parks, walks and trails - also benefit communities and the local authorities tasked with adjudicating on growing numbers of projects and enforcing planning law, according to McHugh.

MULTI-DISCIPLINED APPROACH

The firm, which is headquartered in Cork, also has a hub in Dublin and is today rated among the top three in Ireland when it comes to producing objective, balanced environmental reports, along with exceptionally detailed planning applications with very specific, enforceable controls for local authorities.

It provides services across the full life cycle of assets, for civil infrastructure, waste management and renewable energy developments. Fehily Timoney have worked with 25 local authorities around the country over the past 30 years and currently have live projects with 12 councils nationwide, according to David McHugh.

Their multi-disciplined approach

provides a 'one-stop-shop' for pre-planning feasibility assessments, to determine critical infrastructure requirements for housing and commercial developments, he added.

"Very few firms have the dynamic, in-house team which we do. When communities come asking questions, we can give them answers they understand. Community engagement is mandatory on our Northern Ireland projects. We see it as the only way forward and as an excellent tool in helping stop planning delays."

ALL CONCERNS ADDRESSED

Associate Director, Jim Hughes, says the Fehily Timoney approach is very much about bringing communities along; creating a sense of ownership and achieving real and meaningful community engagement.

"We went so far as to delay one recent wind application until we managed to address concerns raised by both the local authority and the community. We've adopted a similar approach on an ongoing solar project in Cork where a community, impacted by quarrying, was concerned. When locals understood the clean tech and saw it wouldn't create nuisance, they bought in.

"We removed three turbines from a recent wind project and added community trails etc. What Minister Coveney and Minister Naughten are proposing in terms of increased engagement, we're routinely doing. And it works."

Eamon Timoney remains at the helm of the growing firm. He has 40 years of experience in serving local authorities. Other members of his leadership team include David McHugh and Bernie Guinan who have approximately 20 years' experience each, ensuring the firm remains at the forefront when it comes to leadership, talent and expertise.



Associate Director Jim Hughes and Operations Director David McHugh of Fehily Timoney & Co.



Kilgallioch Windfarm in Scotland – this 96 turbine development won the 2017 ACEI Design Excellence Award for FT.