

# THE IRISH TIMES

## Irish-Canadian group plans 200m wind farm

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Saturday, January 26, 2008

Irish-Canadian energy group Finavera intends using new streamlined planning procedures to get permission to build a €200 million wind farm on land it is proposing to buy from State-owned Coillte.

The group, registered in Ireland and listed in Toronto, Canada, proposes to build a wind farm with the capacity to produce 100 megawatts (MW) of electricity in the Cloosh Valley, near Oughterard, Co Galway.

Finavera has already been refused planning permission for the project. It told shareholders this week that "the next stages of development include the submission of an application for planning permission to An Bord Pleanála under newly established streamlined guidelines for strategic infrastructure projects".

Electricity projects can qualify as vital infrastructure, which means that anyone proposing them can take their application straight to the planning board, which until this year acted only as an appeals body.

Wind projects that have 50 turbines or that produce more than 100 MW qualify as strategic infrastructure under the law that introduced the new system.

Normally, a 100MW farm would require 50 turbines. The cost of such a development could run from €125 million to €200 million, depending on the cost of the equipment.

A wind farm on that scale could potentially provide enough power to supply 30,000 homes. As a rule of thumb, it is reckoned that 1MW can power 1,000 households, but wind farms can only operate for about one third of the time. Finavera already has planning permission to install equipment that will test the site's suitability for the facility,

and has an option to buy up to 800 hectares from State forestry company, Coillte, which has a large land bank there.

A Coillte spokesman confirmed to The Irish Times that the option is in place, but added that any final deal depends on the company getting the necessary planning permission.

The parties are unlikely to agree a price for the land unless the planning appeals board gives the project the green light.

Finavera has also applied to Eirgrid, the State body that manages the Republic's electricity transmission system, for a connection that will allow it to feed power into the national grid.

The group said this week that the application process is under way. It is likely to get an answer at some point this year.

If the plant goes ahead, the group says it will qualify for State support that will guarantee the level of revenues it earns.

Currently all on-land wind projects qualify for these supports, the cost of which is ultimately passed on to electricity users.

Finavera was founded in Ireland in September 2003 and has Irish shareholders. It was floated on the Toronto Stock Exchange early last year after completing a reverse takeover of a listed cash shell, GTO resources.

It is involved in wind projects in Canada and Germany, and has just received a licence to begin testing a wave energy system off the northwest coast of the US.

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