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# RECODE: Identifying a pathway for co-owned renewable energy.

## Abstract

Renewable energy communities (RECs) are entities which are owned by shareholders or members that live near the renewable energy projects. RECs can make the energy transition fairer, build social cohesion and increase local economic development. However, the challenges to the development of RECs are significant due to financial risk, complexity of development and a lack of local expertise. To date the development of RECs in Ireland has been limited. The Recode project explores the potential for communities to collaborate with experienced developers to avoid many of the risks associated with REC development. To identify barriers and opportunities for co-ownership, a series of online focus groups were carried out with Irish and international community energy participants; Irish renewable energy industry and Irish policymakers.

## Research Outcomes

The power dynamic in collaborative ownership projects is key. Community participants outlined the need to protect the community share with strong accountability and governance structures. Additional support from government agencies is also required. Working with an approachable and trustworthy industry partner is crucial.

Participants noted the pragmatic strategic advantages of engaging in collaborative models. These benefits include cost and complexity reductions, and skills and capacity building. Developers and broader society benefit from reduced opposition to development and an expedited energy transition.

However, significant barriers to co-ownership exist, including grid connection

issues, perceived lack of political will, RESS policy restrictions and hybrid grid connection issues. Industry indicates that financial institutions may still have concerns due to a lack of existing models.

## Recommendations

### CO-OWNERSHIP POLICY

Offer shared ownership as standard for all new wind farm developments and repowering and extensions.



### CITIZEN INVESTMENT

Explore opportunities to develop citizen investment schemes for offshore wind energy in particular.

### SHARED OWNERSHIP EXPERT SUPPORT

The SEAI should explore methods to provide funding, contractors and legal expertise in shared ownership for interested communities.



### RESS FLEXIBILITY

Creation of funding category in RESS to permit co-ownership while maintaining existing supports provided by SRESS.

### CO-OWNERSHIP PILOTS

Utilise state and semi-state developers to conduct co-ownership pilots to act as demonstration projects.



### TARGETS

Set concrete national targets for community projects with actions and task owners.

### CONNECTION POLICIES

Finalise hybrid connection policies including the permitting of multiple legal entities to share connection points.



### COOPERATIVE STUDY

Conduct study to assess the legal and policy changes required to facilitate cooperatives.

### CAPITAL FUNDING

Conduct stakeholder engagement with the finance sector to establish what additional security is required.



### SKILLS AND TRAINING

Provide local level skills and training courses for community groups keen to develop renewables.

### COMMUNITY ENERGY FORUM

Create a national forum for RECs, SECs and co-owners to share experiences and support future projects.

