

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT  
ON TUESDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2023**

**OFFSHORE WIND**

I am today lodging a Proposition, on behalf of the Council of Ministers, which seeks the support of this Assembly to begin a process to consent the development of a wind farm in Jersey waters.

This is not a new idea; it has been talked about for many years, and is heavily trailed in the Carbon Neutral Roadmap and Bridging Island Plan.

What is new – we believe – is the opportunity to work with credible private investors to secure a development without public subsidy.

Sir, we have heard today from the Minister for Economic Development, who has rightly set us all a challenge: to adapt our economy to preserve Jersey’s unique and special character.

I welcome the recognition of these challenging realities, and the call for bold policy responses.

In the development of offshore wind and the creation of a new green energy sector to power our future economy, I believe we have such a positive and exciting response.

The Council of Ministers, after considering the matter, believes it is right to promote and support the development of up to 1GW of generating capacity, in the south-west of Jersey’s waters.

The Proposition we have lodged today sets out a clear process to ask islanders and States Members if they agree.

Sir, I want to explain briefly why I and other ministers believe this to be such a significant opportunity for Jersey.

We know that our waters are well suited to the most viable forms of offshore wind. As our feasibility study confirms, we enjoy ‘relatively shallow sites and energetic wind conditions’.

We know that both the capital and operational costs of offshore wind have fallen markedly in recent years, driven by the use of larger turbines, supply chain improvements and greater investor confidence.

And we know that Jersey has a strong history of attracting global investment, based on the stability of our governance and the quality of our legal and regulatory frameworks.

With the support of this Assembly, we seek to harness this opportunity and the benefits it can bring to our island.

These benefits can take many forms. They include:

- Access to locally generated renewable energy can provide greater price stability for islanders at a time when energy markets are volatile.
  
- A wind farm can create new income streams to fund our net zero transition and support our public services.

- And reliable access to renewable power can be a platform on which we build our future economy – attracting new green investment to modernise agriculture, decarbonise our tourism and hospitality sector, and support the development of data intensive digital products and services.

And of course, Sir, a wind farm would allow us to *lock in*, for the long-term, the access to low carbon energy that we currently enjoy – ensuring no backsliding in the commitments we have made under the Paris Agreement.

Sir, I want to briefly outline the process we are proposing today, as set out in the Council of Ministers’ report and proposition.

In addition to this statement we will, this week, publish some further background information on a new gov.je webpage.

A public engagement phase will launch in the week of 6 November and run for 14 weeks. During this period, islanders will have the chance to see visual mock-ups of the proposed wind farm, understand the proposals in more detail including at a series of public meetings, and have their say via a formal consultation questionnaire.

Because it is important that we listen closely to islanders’ views, ministers are proposing that the proposition lodged today should be debated in March, after the close of the public consultation and publication of the findings.

We recognise that, because we are opening this conversation at an early stage, we do not yet have full answers to many of the questions that will be of most interest. Indeed, many of these questions – what size turbines will be used?; which electricity grids will the wind farm connect to? – will be answered only when a detailed application for consent is submitted.

Ahead of the proposed March debate we intend to work closely with Scrutiny to hear and respond to the further questions that we know States Members and islanders will have, and to publish further information where that is helpful.

Following this in-principle phase – and as set out in more detail in today’s report – we expect that a competitive process to award an option for lease can be undertaken in 2025, in order to identify the right developer for the project.

The chosen developer will then prepare a development consent application, over several years, setting out in full and rigorous detail – and through consultation with islanders and neighbouring jurisdictions – their technical and commercial plans, and their Environmental Impact Assessment and the steps they will take to mitigate any residual harm to our natural environment.

Over this period, Ministers will also continue their joint fact finding and close on-going dialogue with counterparts in the Bailiwick of Guernsey, to understand and explore any shared opportunities that might arise.

Sir, we recognise that a development of this size and scale requires a robust regulatory regime with the necessary powers to minimise and seek redress for any unintended harm that might arise.

That is why our Proposition also seeks the support of this Assembly to bring forward, in 2024, a new law to provide for the consenting, regulation and safe decommissioning of a wind farm and its associated infrastructure.

Sir, the proposals we are setting out today seek support for up to around 1GW, or 1000MW, of generating capacity in the south west of Jersey waters.

The development area we are looking at is set out in our report, and takes account of wind and seabed conditions, and of shipping channels and the protections rightly afforded to the special environments of Les Minquiers.

For those who have already seen the St Brieuc windfarm, from most viewpoints, our windfarm would appear as an extension of the French installation.

Generating capacity at this scale is expected to produce around 3,800 GWh of energy when wind intermittency and transmission losses are accounted for. This is around six times Jersey's current electricity demand, and around twice our requirement if all the energy needs of our current economy – including transport and home heating – were powered entirely by electricity.

This scale of development is recommended because it represents a viable and attractive commercial investment opportunity, with what we believe are likely to be acceptable visual and environmental impacts; and because of the export potential it creates.

Exporting clean power helps grow Jersey's economy and – by displacing fossil generation elsewhere – helps meet the global responsibility to get to net zero emissions.

I wish to be clear though, even if a wind farm of this scale is built, we will not be entirely reliant on wind power. Our energy system will need to continue to make use of imported electricity to ensure a consistent and stable service at all times.

We should instead see the proposed wind farm and interconnectors as an opportunity to make a substantial enhancement to our existing electricity system; one that in future may be joined by other investments that further expand and diversify a growing energy export sector.

Nothing we are proposing today takes any future opportunities off the table. Indeed, the work to develop the legal and regulatory frameworks for offshore renewables, and the investments in grid development, will be forward thinking and designed to enable future opportunities – such as may one day be presented by tidal barrage technologies – as they become more commercially available.

We are only at the start of understanding how we might unlock the potential of our marine resources – and perhaps, in future, those of our sister Channel Islands – through the development of a sustainable integrated island energy system.

These are issues I, and I know many forward-thinking islanders, will be keen to explore in the future. For now though, we are proposing Jersey should take its first, substantial, but eminently practical, step forward.

Sir, there are around 19 countries already operating in the offshore wind market, and around 30 more actively seeking to enter it.

While we are confident in the Jersey opportunity, we have no guaranteed right to secure this investment, nor any intention to fund the development ourselves.

We are, therefore, in a beauty parade. A global beauty parade to seek the most experienced, responsible, far sighted and community-minded development partners.

We know what those partners will ask of us: to set clear timescales and clear rules, and to stick to them; and to provide consistent and sustained political leadership.

This consistency of political leadership is crucial if we are to present an acceptable investment risk for the billion plus pounds of funding that will need to be raised.

This is not a call for everyone to get in line, or a demand that Members should agree with me and with the Council of Ministers.

Instead, it is to recognise that only by surfacing our differences, considering them carefully and – as so often in this Assembly – by finding workable compromises, can we create the firm and stable foundations that a project of this magnitude requires.

So, we now have a period of time to explore this idea, to challenge each other and debate the merits. And then, if it is the will of this Assembly to proceed, Jersey can live up to its reputation as a stable and credible investment partner, as recognised today by investors the world over.

This is the responsibility we are elected to discharge and – in the interests of our future economy and future generations of islanders – we must do this calmly, with clear thinking and to the very best of our abilities. I believe that today we have set out a process that can achieve this.

Sir, I am happy to take questions from fellow Members.