



Tionól Réigiúnach
an Deiscirt

Southern Regional
Assembly

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Teach an Tionóil,
Sráid Uí Chonaill,
Pórt Láirge,
X91 F8PC
Éire.

Southern Regional Assembly

Assembly House,
O'Connell Street,
Waterford,
X91 F8PC
Ireland.

Department of the Enterprise, Trade and Employment,
23 Kildare Street,
Dublin 2,
D02 TD30
OffshoreWind@enterprise.gov.ie

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**Re: Submission to National Industrial Strategy for Offshore Wind Consultation
SRA File Ref: G 23/006**

A Chara,

The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) welcome the opportunity to engage with this Consultation.

The SRA's submission is based on the Region's priorities as set out in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). The RSES sets a 12-year statutory strategic planning and economic development framework for future economic, spatial, and social development and aims for the Southern Region to become one of Europe's most "**Creative and Innovative**", "**Liveable**" and "**Greenest**" Regions. The RSES is a key component of the implementation of the Project Ireland 2040 process and the development of the Offshore Wind Energy (OWE) sector provides a significant opportunity to achieve national and regional objectives for balanced regional development including the achievement of the 50:50 split in growth between the Eastern and Midlands Region (EMRA) and the Northern & Western Region and Southern Region identified as core national policy in the National Planning Framework.

The RSES provides significant support through Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs)¹ for the OWE sector. In addition, the RSES supports growth in marine economic clusters, sustainable development of our Region's port and harbour infrastructure and multi modal connectivity between ports for freight and supply chain logistics. Such support seeks the sector to grow at scale, drive regional economic growth and retain the economic potential of the sector within the Region. Support for our marine economy and transition to a net zero carbon energy future is a priority for RSES implementation² and reflected

¹ <http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Southern%20Regional%20Assembly%20RSES%202020%20High%20Res.pdf>

² <http://www.southernassembly.ie/regional-planning/two-year-report-progress-report>



in our recent submissions to OREDP II and DMAP for the South Coast³. The SRA welcome this consultation and request that we are consulted as a key stakeholder throughout the preparation and implementation of the strategy.

This response is structured around the identified 'Core Themes' and key considerations.

1.0 Closing the Supply Chain Gaps, Building Co-Operation, and RD & I

1.1 RSES Implementation and Smart Specialisation

To develop the enterprise supply chain for OWE, the State should facilitate regional approaches to **Smart Specialisation (S3)**. S3 focuses on measures to improve the regions attractiveness as a location for national and foreign investment and aims to increase entrepreneurial activity. The [National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027](#) and the SRA's '[Regional Approach for development of a Smart Specialisation Strategy in the Southern Region](#)' prepared with BABLE GmbH⁴ highlight that OWE is a priority area for the region based on its resources and existing research and innovation ecosystem.

Other RSES implementation initiatives that will complement the implementation of the strategy include:

- A '**Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region**' in accordance with RPO 145 of the RSES. The SRA will procure specialists in Q4 2023 to work on a socio-economic impact analysis of our ports and harbours and related sectors on the region's economy and potential growth to drive regional economic development. This work will provide an evidence base for recommendations to National Ports Policy review and assist business cases for investing in port infrastructure, which can enable the OWE sector. This study will include an assessment of EU good practices with regards OWE supply chains. The SRA will continue to consult with DETE in the preparation of this analysis.
- The SRA in conjunction with the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, SEAI and the other Assemblies are developing **Regional Renewable Energy Strategy Roadmap and Strategy** under the Climate Action Plan. In addition, the SRA have secured support from ESPON (EU Programme conducting EU territorial analysis) to conduct a case study on decarbonisation in the Region. This analysis will support the development of a Regional Decarbonisation Plan. Harnessing the potential of OWE and associated renewable energy production in the Region, including Green Hydrogen, is a strategic opportunity.

The SRA recommend that DETE work with Regional Assemblies in the implementation governance of the strategy to ensure implementation is aligned with existing and future reviews of the RSES.

There is an additional opportunity for implementation of the OWE strategy to complement National and Regional S3 implementation, through integration of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Processes. Implementing actions through the networks of the Regional Enterprise Plans (SW, MW and SE) will also ensure a joined-up thinking for engaging key stakeholders in the OWE enterprise ecosystem.

³ <http://www.southernassembly.ie/regional-planning/sra-consultation-submissions>

⁴ http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/SRA_S3_Final_Report.pdf



1.2 Cross National and Regional Government Policy and Strategy Co-Ordination and Alignment

Support for supply chain enterprise activities requires high quality infrastructure provision and connectivity (digital and multi-modal transport) ensuring that placemaking attributes to attract enterprise development to the Region for the OWE sector. There are many complementary policies, plans and commitment to action across enterprise development, the port sector, freight sector, transport sector, renewable energy sector inter alia. Central, regional, and local government are working on parallel initiatives to support the sector's growth. There is a danger that the complementarity between different sector and agency actions isn't shared or capitalised upon. This is especially important for positive alignment in planning for activities in the maritime area, adjacent landside activities to enable the maritime activity (connections especially).

It is important therefore that the governance and implementation of the strategy seeks:

- i. long term robust land and sea interaction planning, assisted by frameworks at national, regional, and local level, to coordinate activity and enabling infrastructure projects; and
- ii. joined up thinking across plans and strategies including the National Planning Framework National Ports Policy, Designated Maritime Area Plans, National, Regional and Local Renewable Energy Strategies, Transport Plans including Metropolitan Transport Strategies, Regional Freight Strategies, All Island Rail Review, National Hydrogen Strategy, IDA Ireland, and Enterprise Ireland strategic policy and plans inter alia.

1.3 Funding Initiatives

An example of a funded initiative that has potential to improve the OWE supply chain is Enterprise Ireland's [Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme](#) supported under the Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027⁵. This Scheme is seeking projects that support the development of innovative services through local infrastructure, innovation clusters, services to SME's, early-stage feasibility, and priming research that align with the actions outlined in the Regional Enterprise Plans. Each of the Regional Enterprise Plans in the Southern Region support enterprise growth from renewable energy and OWE especially. This funding call will be a stimulus for enterprise actions and partnerships between enterprise agencies, research and innovation centres and industry. Learning from the outcomes of this funding call should inform implementation of the strategy. In addition, funding may also be available from 'Project Ireland', 'Horizon', and other EU Instruments to support the goals of the 'Green Deal' to further RD&I activities and development of market ready solutions.

1.4 Learning and Skills for OWE

The RSES supports the development of a Learning Region and seeks a collaborative approach to regional skills development, aligned to the needs and opportunities of regional economies. Consistent with these objectives, a significant strengthening is needed in our higher and further education sectors at regional level. With the support of the State, Higher Education Institutes, Further Education, learning

⁵ <https://www.southernassembly.ie/eu-programmes/sem2127>



and skills development through Regional Skills Forums can nurture OWE research and innovation, enterprise creation, skills, and talent to grow the sector.

Through support of initiatives delivered through the SRA, projects could be encouraged to coalesce around OWE supply chain cluster, supported by policy through S3 initiatives, with capacity built through learning region supports, and with funding and public investment from the State and EU.

1.5 Key Recommendations

In summary, to support supply chain for OWE in the Southern Region, the SRA recommend:

- Coalesce enterprise development around existing strengths of the Region's marine economy ecosystem, which includes a significant combined strengthen of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports of Cork, Shannon Foynes, Rosslare Europort, Waterford Belview, Regional Ports and Harbours, Shannon Estuary (which has a Strategic Integrated Framework Plan in place), Cork Harbour Economy, centres of marine education, research and innovation (such as MAREI, Kilrush Marine Training Centre) inter alia. These assets can be used to grow clusters in the sector and are a significant proposition to drive job creation and the regional economy.
- Alignment of implementation and governance of the strategy with RSES implementation.
- Alignment of implementation and governance of the strategy with national and regional S3 and integrated with action delivery through the SW, MW and SE Regional Enterprise Plans.
- Capital investment to the Southern Region for infrastructure projects, especially for ports and harbours to sustainably develop capacity to service OWE industry , connectivity (multi modal road and rail and digital) and transport led land use planning for strategic landbanks that can service OWE sector and supply chain enterprise activity.
- Ensure implementation and governance of the strategy captures a whole of government approach across complementary policies, strategies and plans that will support growth of the sector (National Ports Policy, Designated Maritime Area Plans, National Hydrogen Strategy, All Island Rail Review, Regional Freight Strategies inter alia).
- Support the preparation of future national, regional, and local frameworks to strategically plan for effective land and sea activity interactions to enable the sustainable development of the OWE sector.
- Build capacity for enterprise, research, and innovation stakeholders to win funding, especially communicating opportunities through initiatives like Enterprise Ireland's Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme and other future funding opportunities (EU and State) to grow the enterprise and RD&I ecosystems in the sector.
- Invest in our Region's Higher and Further Education Institutes and skills development (recommendations of the SRA's Towards a Learning Region) to grow employment opportunities in the sector.



2.0 Ensuring Success

2.1 Regional Infrastructure Investment

It is noted that the focus of this consultation is on measures and initiatives to accelerate the development of the OWE supply chain and its complementary R&D ecosystem. The success of this approach will also be dependent on how development is delivered.

Our Region with its Port assets and OWE resources has considerable potential to attract inward investment, skills, and talent. To be competitive in attracting OWE sector companies and stimulate indigenous enterprise growth in the sector, our Region must be an attractive place to live, work, and play. Key to this will be delivering balanced regional development under the NPF and NDP, investing in the infrastructure (especially supporting sustainable port development and multi modal connectivity to and between our ports) which will be critical to enabling OWE at scale. Government should be prioritising the southern region in these terms.

2.2 OWE Enterprise Growth and our Region's Place Based Drivers of Growth

The close interaction of economic corridors (Atlantic Economic Corridor and Eastern Corridor), our Cities and Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford, network of Key Towns and their proximity and interactions with the maritime area and ports where landside OWE activities will concentrate, is a key opportunity.

OWE economic growth will be supported by growing, infrastructure ready metropolitan areas and Key Towns that are attractive for enterprise growth. The enterprise activity generated by OWE should coalesce within these urban centres close to Ports. It is a potential win-win opportunity for supporting OWE development and supply chain enterprise, services, and operation activities through our strong coastal urban network and for OWE to support economic development, vibrancy, and employment opportunities for our Region's settlements. It's important that the RD&I and enterprise development are plan led, integrated with land use transport planning for sustainable mobility and an opportunity for economic growth in our settlements. This will reinforce attractiveness for investment.

Our experience from the recent DMAP consultation process highlighted that communities support just transition initiatives and would like to see more State led initiatives and ownership, not just private sector driven, to ensure the economic uplift from OWE remains local to coastal communities. It is an objective of the RSES under RPO 83 to support investment which strengthens and sustainably grows coastal and island communities. It is also an objective to seek the implementation and investment in actions that support the Fishing Local Area Group (FLAG) Development Strategies under RPO 84.

2.3 Key Recommendations

In summary, to ensure success for OWE in the Southern Region, the SRA recommend:

- Capital investment in enabling infrastructure to develop our place-based assets (our Cities and Metropolitan Areas, Key Towns, Ports and Harbours, strategic locations along our economic corridors of the Atlantic Economic Corridor and Eastern Corridor) to attract OWE enterprise.



As a priority investment should deliver improved connectivity (multi-modal road and rail) to our ports. This recommendation is complementary to the aims of Ireland's Road Haulage Strategy 2022-2031 and the All-Island Strategic Rail Review.

- The strategy should ensure enterprise development in supply chain economic activity, is infrastructure and plan led, guided by sustainable land use and transportation planning principles to consolidate the economic function of the Region's settlements.
- For our network of coastal and rural towns, close to OWE natural resources, it is important that direct and indirect enterprise growth through OWE activity, provides real opportunities for just transition and new employment in these sectors. It is important that the OWE sector develops in a manner that delivers cross-benefits to other established maritime sectors (seafood and tourism especially) and generates economic uplift and vibrancy for our coastal towns and communities.

3.0 Conclusion

The SRA welcome this opportunity to make this submission. Developing the OWE sector is a significant opportunity for Regional economic development in addition to achieving our national target for a zero-carbon energy system by 2050 to meet our Climate Action commitments. These recommendations, aim to highlight the Region's opportunities, support the consultation process, and facilitate OWE development in the Region.

The SRA welcome follow up consultation and look forward to further engagement on the strategy.

Mise le meas,

David Kelly
Director, Southern Regional Assembly