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Offshore Wind Phase Two Consultation  
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### **Offshore Wind Phase 2 Consultation**

A Chara,

On behalf of Clare County Council, I welcome this opportunity to input into the development of the Phase 2 Offshore Wind deployment in line with the commitments in the Climate Action Plan 2021 which recommits our ambition to install 5GW of offshore wind capacity in our maritime area by 2030. As a Local Authority we fully support this ambition and the importance of transitioning our electricity supply in order to achieve a carbon neutral economy by 2050.

Clare County Council welcomes the preparation of this Phase Two of offshore wind to establish projects which can deliver on this target by 2030 and are keen to support and work with this key industry in realising this maritime potential. We wish to emphasise however, that this 5GW is not a cap and the actual potential goes beyond this with the target of at least 5GW being key. In this regard, we feel the importance of not only considering Fixed Bottom Offshore Wind in this phase is key but also Floating Offshore Wind together with Hybrid connections.

This is based on the knowledge we have gained over recent years in terms of the location of the offshore wind resource which is predominately located in waters 60m and deeper offshore, where bottom-fixed offshore wind is not economically attractive. In addition, the identification of hybrid connections will be key to overcoming the security of supply, allow for the sustainable development of renewable energy without the need for new infrastructure and most significantly lead to the more efficient use of the same infrastructure. A significant portion of the seas suitable for offshore wind developments in Ireland have a water depth greater than 60m and therefore to capitalise on the available wind resources around the coastline, the use of floating technology will be required.

Clare County Council, at Local Government level, sees the vital importance of long-term forward planning for Ireland's maritime environment given the interface with the terrestrial land-based planning which we currently undertake. This interface has largely been ignored in the past and is now a critical space which we need to future proof. As a Local Authority we were and continue to be at the forefront of forward planning for the interaction of maritime and the terrestrial area through our leadership in the preparation and implementation of the *Strategic Integrated Framework Plan*

*(SIFP) for the Shannon Estuary.* Clare County Council recognises the significant economic benefit this sector can bring to not only the county but to the region and to Ireland as a whole. The development of a supply chain to accompany this emerging technology and the ability to capitalise on the turbine supply chain benefits within this interface with the marine environment from this industry is immense.

#### **Policy support**

Clare County Council is hugely excited about the potential for the County and adjoining waters to contribute to the minimum 5MW target. In particular the proposed Green Atlantic project at Moneypoint can harness a wide range of socio-economic benefits to the local community and many local businesses not just within West Clare but across the county and beyond to the region. It is almost 40 years since this site was first developed as a flagship energy project, in what was one of the largest capital projects ever undertaken in the state. In the decades that followed, Moneypoint went on to play a critical role in Ireland's electricity supply system while providing skilled employment to hundreds of people in the local community and wider County Clare. It is massively encouraging to now see a proactive plan being put into action to reinvent this asset in a manner that will provide large scale employment in the rural areas around this part of our County.

The proposal is consistent with the vision of Clare County Council for the Shannon Estuary as expressed in our planning policy document the *Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023* the draft *Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029* and the *Clare Renewable Energy Strategy*. Moreover, the project aligns with regional objectives regarding the Shannon Estuary as set out in the *Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary*. Our County Development Plan contains key objectives relating to the enabling infrastructure required along the West Clare coastline to facilitate the manufacturing, assembly and operation of floating turbine foundations used in these Offshore Wind farms. At a national level the support for Hybrid Connections as identified in the Climate Action Plan will be key to minimising grid reinforcement. Clare County Council recognises the significant lead in time required to realise floating offshore wind projects and it is in this regard that we feel the Phase Two Offshore Wind proposals should explicitly include an ambition to deploy **floating** offshore wind in advance of Phase 3 which relates to beyond 2030. This will allow the lead in time to 2030 to be utilised to develop this key supply chain sector.

#### **Economic benefit of Floating Offshore Wind to the West Coast**

Clare County Council sees the immense opportunities to the western and southern regions that could be afforded by early adoption and deployment of floating offshore wind, both in the context of the immediate supply chain benefits but also the opportunity that can be unlocked by floating offshore wind for the future development of a hydrogen economy.

Green Atlantic at Moneypoint is a multi-billion Euro programme of significant investment on the site over the next decade resulting in hundreds of jobs, including;

- **Renewable enablement:** ESB has already commenced work on transforming Moneypoint into a green energy hub through the commencement of the construction of a €50m Synchronous Compensator will be the largest of its kind in the world. This new plant will provide a range of electrical services to the electricity grid which would previously have been supplied by thermal fired power stations. Its operation will enable higher volumes of renewables on the system.
- **A wind turbine construction hub:** Moneypoint will become a centre for the construction and assembly of floating wind turbines. A deep-water port already exists at the site, making it an ideal staging ground for the construction of wind farms. It is expected this will generate a

significant number of direct jobs in the Mid-West region. In the longer term, the development of Moneypoint will support wider plans of Shannon Foynes port, and working with local stakeholders, help make the Shannon Estuary a focal point for the offshore wind industry in Europe.

- **Hydrogen Energy:** ESB’s plans include investment in a green hydrogen production, storage and generation facility at Moneypoint towards the end of the decade. A clean, zero-carbon fuel, green hydrogen will be produced from renewable energy and used for power generation, heavy goods vehicles in the transport sector and to help decarbonise a wide range of industries such as pharmaceuticals, electronics and cement manufacturing.

This significant development will only be achieved if we prioritise and front load the commitment to deploy Offshore Floating wind prior to 2030 and Phase 3.

#### Socio Economic gain

In June 2017 the Central Statistics Office reported 79 employment blackspots in Ireland. An employment blackspot is an area where unemployment exceeds 27%. Of the 79 blackspots, 20 are located in Limerick and Clare, and in the case of Clare two of the three blackspots were identified in the west Clare towns of Kilrush and Kilkee. A third blackspot was identified in the Ennis urban area.

|                              | June 2017 | June 2018 | June 2019 |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| No. on Live Register - Total | 6,075     | 5,198     | 4,529     |
| Under 25 years               | 690       | 572       | 474       |
| 25 years + over              | 5,385     | 4,622     | 4,055     |
| Male - All Ages              | 3,286     | 2,790     | 2,388     |
| Female - All Ages            | 2,789     | 2,408     | 2,141     |

**Table 1.1. Persons on the Clare Live Register annually in June**

In June 2019, 4,529 persons were identified as being on the live register in the county, a reduction of 25.4% on the same month in 2017. Within the under 25 age group that comprises 10.4% of those on the register, there was a reduction of 31.3% of persons on the Live register with a drop of 24.7% in the larger over 25 years demographic comprising 89.5% of person on the Live register.

In June 2019 there was an approximate split 53:47 male to female split in the composition of persons on the register. The male segment shows a reduction 27.3% in numbers between June 2017 to June 2019, with the female segment reducing by 23.2% over the same period.

