


Sonairte's Contribution to the Public Consultation on the expansion of Ireland's Offshore Wind Plan through Phase Two



Ireland has committed to installing 5GW of offshore wind in Irish waters by 2030, however Phase One of the Offshore Wind Plan will not meet this goal (Department of the Environment Climate and Communications, 2021). For this reason, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications is proposing Stage Two of the Offshore Wind Plan to allow more offshore wind projects to be build and provide results by 2030. This is an extremely tight timeline, and it is vital the most efficient and productive projects are selected for building permission and allocated connection to the Irish electrical grid run by EirGrid.

Sonairte supports the ambitious aim to install 5GW of offshore wind in Ireland by 2030 and looks to the government to continue to invest in renewable energy beyond the 2030 goal. The Enduring Regime's goal of up to 30GW of power from offshore wind should be prioritised in these initial phases of the process. It is necessary to push offshore wind technology for Ireland to meet its national and EU international level emission goals (Esteban et al., 2011). Sonairte is committed to educating the public about sustainable living including sustainable energy. The aim to eliminate carbon emissions in Ireland is aligned with Sonairte's vision for the future.

The Phase Two process has four proposed options to select candidates for the Offshore Renewable Energy Support Scheme (ORESS 2) which weigh various advantages and disadvantages. While Sonairte does not have the technical background to support a particular option, overall, it is encouraged that the option chosen quickly and efficiently selects candidates to fully reach the goals for 2030 wind power and beyond. Meeting this timeline is essential to bolster Ireland's renewable energy sources and live into its binding targets of lowering greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to at least 55% below 1990 levels (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2021). Eliminating carbon emissions from Irish energy generation will impact overall GHG emissions as the energy industries sector creates 15% of GHG emissions in 2020, the third highest contributor (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021).

Offshore wind turbines will change the visual appearance of the shoreline. Within County Meath, proposed offshore wind farms will likely impact the sea view ("What's your view of proposals for a €1bn Irish Sea wind farm?," 2021). For this reason, it is important to collaborate with local communities to ensure public participation and support. The trade-off for changing visuals is increased energy security and cleaner sources of that energy. Sonairte supports the building of offshore wind farms in the Irish Sea and off County Meath's coast. This will support the county's transition to renewable energy and secure jobs for the future.

References

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- Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law'), (2021). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021R1119>
- What's your view of proposals for a €1bn Irish Sea wind farm? (2021). *Meath Chronicle*. <https://www.meathchronicle.ie/2021/02/08/whats-your-view-of-proposals-for-a-e1bn-irish-sea-wind-farm/>

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Offshore Wind Phase Two Consultation
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RE: Offshore Wind Phase Two Consultation

A Chara,

We would like to register our support for offshore wind, which will play a major part in realising the target of 80% renewable electricity by 2030 and thereby assisting Ireland decarbonise. This is absolutely critical if we are to demonstrate climate leadership internationally on the net zero concept.

Naturally we would like this done without any adverse impacts on marine life, but it seems that often there can be positive benefits in terms of the absence of trawlers scouring the sea floor. Indeed bottom trawling (a fishing method that involves scraping the ocean floor with giant nets) has a double negative in that, not only is it a practice that impacts on stocks, it also releases as much carbon into the atmosphere as the entire aviation industry does - about a billion metric tons a year.¹ We believe offshore wind should have broader aspirations in mind that connect biodiversity, natural capital stocks and carbon sequestration. For example:

- Can we design our seascape such that **50% of marine areas are left alone** such that fish stocks and marine life can recover? Offshore Wind might offer a means of such protection that, once the foundations or ocean bed tethering is in place, sea life is minimally impacted.
- Can we design in **kelp forests** for enhanced **carbon sequestration**? See [Sierra Club blog](#) on this for example, which states a **thousand metric tons of CO2 per year per square kilometre** could be the sequestration potential. This could be very interesting considering **Ireland is failing on afforestation targets** with public objection to some sites

With 90% of Ireland's territory being marine, there is an **incredible opportunity here to align natural capital, biodiversity and climate action ambitions**. This can be done sensitively with the right marine expertise and carbon specialists.

We ask for accelerated development and support the ESB's submission to use existing onshore power station grid connections for offshore wind projects such that any requirement for possible new connections does not slow down progress.

Yours sincerely,

¹ <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2021-2-summer/stress-test/can-farming-seaweed-put-brakes-climate-change>