

Submission

Offshore Wind – Phase Two Consultation

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)

On behalf of The Clare Economic Task Force

9th March 2022

To whom it may concern,

I am making this submission to the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) in respect of the second round of consultation on offShore wind on behalf of *the Clare Economic Task Force* of which I am the Chairperson.

The Clare Economic Task Force is a group of public and private sector leaders with a regional and global perspective, convened in 2020 by Pat Dowling, Chief Executive of Clare County Council, to help inform and guide economic development and job creation in Co. Clare.

A Key opportunity has been identified in our own natural environment in the context of floating offshore wind and the sustainable use of our maritime assets.

This matter resonates in County Clare in the context of the Shannon Estuary, our potential coastal energy sources, industry/population centres and Moneypoint: Its location on the estuary, existing site infrastructure/scale and connectivity to the national grid make it a key strategic site for any future energy project.

Moneypoint can also transition to become a 'hybrid' connector to enable offshore wind, maximise infrastructure and ensuring consistency of supply – diversifying the skills base and employment market while decarbonising the electricity supply.

We see the early adoption of floating offshore wind technology as an unmistakable strategic opportunity for the country. At a time of global change in terms of climate and geo-politics, there is an obvious prospect to promote the technology, build a supply chain (as others have done with onshore wind) and to meet the emerging EU energy needs of which we have all become too acutely aware in recent times.

The Climate Action Plan and the Programme for Government envisage at least 5GW of offshore wind to be operational in Irish waters by 2030 and an aspiration to develop at least 30GW of floating offshore wind by 2050.

Having drawn from our collective understanding and taken some guidance through our own information channels we believe that there is sound evidence to support the development of floating offshore wind in terms of both the manufacturing (for market supply) and installation (for local generation) of concrete foundations.

I refer specifically to the report completed by BVG Associates on behalf of ESB which has demonstrated that the construction and assembly of a 400MW floating offshore windfarm off the west coast using the existing Moneypoint power station site as the construction and assembly hub could create a total gross value added (GVA) of €934m to the Irish economy with over 7,000 direct person year jobs and almost 5,000 indirect person year roles.

Our investigations also suggest that floating off-shore wind presents the opportunity to generate energy across a wider footprint of our maritime zone by addressing the depth challenge in our natural waters - most of our national seabed lies below 60m.

The greater potential in the development of these technologies and tapping into this energy source lies in the opportunity to export to international markets and provide green, renewable energy into the development of our own hydrogen-based energy market: A key future energy source in the transport sector that is emerging.

As a group we believe that while the installation of current technologies can serve to meet the needs of the country in the short term, there is a significant opportunity to address our medium to long term requirements, meet emerging EU need as well as becoming global market leaders, creating new skills and employment while maximising our natural resources.

In short, in the development of national policy, there is an opportunity now to be ambitious, resourceful, and forward thinking for the benefit of our climate, economy and future generations.

Deployment of floating offshore wind projects at Moneypoint and elsewhere requires the Government to act now to ensure that the projects are granted MACs as soon as possible so that the projects can be operational by 2030. In turn, EirGrid needs to recognise the additional capacity that can be provided by hybrid connections so that projects such as the Moneypoint project can be connected to the national grid infrastructure.

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Agency and industry partners in the mid-west have a long history of collaboration and strategic thinking. There is a common vision (i.e., the Shannon Integrated Framework), a need, a resource, and a pathway for a more commercially successful and sustainable energy supply in the development of floating offshore wind energy.

The Clare Economic Task Force is supportive of all measures to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels and to protect the country from geo-political unrest, but our ambitions are to strive for excellence. In that regard we believe that there is a significant opportunity to look beyond current technologies and trends and to invest to become leaders in the emerging floating offshore wind energy market.

We began drafting our submission before the Russian invasion of Ukraine began and now, we and our European partners find ourselves in a new world of oil and gas shortages. And yet, here on our own doorstep, is an endless energy resource and with it the opportunity to free ourselves from future energy dependence.

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Chairperson