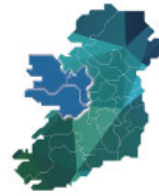




REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN
NORTH-WEST



REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN
TO 2024
WEST

Joint submission to Offshore renewable energy (ORE) Future Framework Policy Statement

Input from West and Northwest Regional Enterprise Programme Managers

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Question 1

Has this section adequately identified the general key priorities for ORE delivery in Ireland? Are there additional priorities that should be integrated into the holistic, plan-led approach?

Utilising the growth of the offshore wind industry for the implementation of government policy around “balanced regional development” should be a central and key priority for this ORE delivery in Ireland. The West and Northwest regional enterprise plans both include the development of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) as we see it as an important opportunity for the economic development of our Regions. Combined with “balanced regional growth” there is a unique opportunity to tackle the “Northern and Western region” status as a region in transition and a lagging region as per EU designates. However, to truly tackle this there needs to be a deliberate and specific focus on this which is not evident in the government’s plans. The NW/W REP is concerned that the draft Future Framework could reinforce our regional economic and infrastructural disadvantage. The Future Framework, despite being a long term plan for sectoral development from 2030 onwards, is focused on existing assets (pg. 24). ORE is an opportunity for economic development and we believe that to spread the benefit of ORE development, there should be a focus on ensuring the benefits of the development of this sector are felt through the country, not just in areas with current infrastructural advantage.

Priority shown to our region may not be based on an economic or a financial decision due to project costs and our infrastructure deficits in the region etc but rather this priority needs to be made on a strategic intentional level by the government. The community and long-lasting economic benefits to our region would be of immense impact.

Question 2

What grid infrastructure should be of particular focus in facilitating the build-out of capacity to support ORE generation targets?

The design and construction of grid infrastructure in the northern and western region should be of particular focus to this government. This government needs to intentionally apply positive discrimination to this region in its infrastructure development. Priority shown to our region may not be based on an economic or a financial decision due to project costs and our infrastructure deficits in the region etc but rather this priority needs to be made on a strategic intentional level by the government.

One of the key barriers to exploiting the opportunity for ORE is the poor grid infrastructure in the north west. This is already limiting options for onshore development. Recognition of this bottleneck and the importance of grid development in this region should be a particular focus of grid planning. We know that grid development is costly, and that these costs are borne by consumers, but ORE development will bring significant revenue, some of which can be used for infrastructure development.

Question 4

What structures, measures, and interventions can the state and state agencies implement to assist in the development of a long-term, sustainable skills and workforce pipeline? Provide any recommendations on what the State can do to promote careers in ORE across a range of educational backgrounds and movement from other relevant sectors.

In order to attract talent to the wind industry workforce it would help to raise awareness of the types of roles and routes to jobs within the industry. It will be required to compete with other government policies which require trades to implement them e.g. housing for all. Promotion of technical career paths to address potential labour market shortages will be required. A public awareness campaign promoting the wind industry, its positive economic effects should be rolled out in line with policy development. Additionally, some grants/direct assistance to encourage existing engineering/manufacturing companies to pivot and apply for work in the ORE industries overseas would be welcome particularly in regions which the roll out of ORE will be another 10 years. Assistance in tendering, navigating overseas regulatory environment and how to apply their existing skills to the industry overseas would be useful to SME's.

To what extent should an emphasis be placed on multipurpose sites for ORE delivery, including the colocation of devices? What Government structures should be developed to encourage and facilitate progress in this aspect?

Multipurpose sites can be located both onshore and offshore. Onshore the combination of power transmission infrastructure with hydrogen electrolyser facilities adjacent to newly developed high energy business parks would be a key opportunity for the "Northern and Western region" to capitalise on the immense wind resources offshore, comparably low demand and poor infrastructure.

Given that hydrogen production can provide large, flexible demand it could serve to support the electricity grid in areas where other demand is low (west and north west). This is another opportunity which could benefit the Region and further emphasises the importance of grid development in the north west.

Societal return

We welcome the Future Framework commitment to ensuring the benefits of ORE for the Irish people are maximised. The focus on the development of the indigenous supply chain is important as is recognition of the potential for knowledge sharing to foster the development of indigenous ORE enterprises. As discussed above, we believe a regional development focus is part of this, but of course community benefits are another key element. The economic analysis provided with the draft Future Framework highlights some of the options and issues for community benefit especially where, as is likely in the long term, ORE development is far offshore and largely out of sight of land.

We refer to an international example of the development of the LNG industry in Western Australia. The aboriginal tribe of Thalanyi people owned the land the Wheatstone LNG plant was developed on in Onslow, Western Australia. "Local employment" of 7% was made compulsory for all contractors and has added in the Thalanyi people developing in their education levels, economic status, integration into the wider community. The inclusion of "Local employment" KPI's for developers is key to ensure gain for the wider communities but also critically the underprivileged communities who need favourable encouragement to participate in industry. Our wind energy potential is high enough that we can be confident of project development – we do not need to be weary of scaring developers with KPI's which can aid in looking after societies weakest.

Conclusion

The North-west and West Regional Enterprise Plan welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the consultation on the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Future Framework Policy Statement.

The NW/Western Region has important renewable resources, both on and offshore, and we are concerned that a focus on development only where there is existing infrastructure will reinforce current infrastructural and other structural disadvantages. ORE provides an opportunity to mitigate this disadvantage if it is given appropriate focus in the planning of the ORE sector.

It is important that this Future Framework maximises the long term societal value of the ORE sector, spreading the benefits and ensuring a development focus to our “region in transition”/ “lagging regions” is an important part of this.

If you would like any more information or to discuss our submission further, please get in touch with me.

Regards,

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