



Submission to the Department of the Environment, Climate and  
Communications on the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Future  
Framework Policy Statement

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## Introduction

Skillnet Ireland is the national talent development agency of the Government of Ireland. In partnership with industry and the education and training sector, we offer upskilling programmes and business supports to companies through 70 Skillnet Business Networks, and three national initiatives - Skillnet Climate Ready Academy, Skillnet Innovation Exchange and Skillnet MentorsWork. These upskilling programmes and initiatives are designed to support and enhance the productivity, competitiveness, and sustainability of Irish businesses, and the Irish economy.

Skillnet Ireland makes a substantial contribution to the national workforce agenda. We provide upskilling services to over 24,500 businesses annually through our Skillnet Business Networks and national upskilling initiatives. Our cost-sharing approach with employers has been a cornerstone of the success of Skillnet Ireland, and has earned international recognition from the EU, the OECD, and the ILO, amongst others, as a best practice model for workforce development.

Skillnet Ireland's network-based approach perfectly captures the spirit of collaboration that lies within the Irish business ecosystem and enables cohesive enterprise networking and the flexibility to respond to ever-changing skills demands through both formal and informal learning. It fosters the sharing of intelligence and insights among industry partners to ensure training interventions are relevant to the needs of enterprise and are of a high standard, all of which drives excellence in learning, innovation, and knowledge transfer, and supports businesses in developing their competitive advantage.

Skillnet Ireland's network-based approach also ensures a cohesive response to government policy. Skillnet Ireland delivers on a range of actions assigned to it across major cross-Government strategies, including the National Skills Strategy, National Digital Strategy, the Climate Action Plan, Housing for All, National Competitiveness Plans and Regional Development Plans. Skillnet Ireland is also a member of a number of government strategy groups, including the Expert Advisory Group on Offshore Wind Skills and Workforce Requirements that was established in March 2023 as part of the Offshore Wind Energy Programme.

Skillnet Ireland is funded from the National Training Fund through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

## Scope of Submission

Skillnet Ireland welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications on the draft Future Framework Policy Statement for offshore renewable energy.

In inviting submissions, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications has invited views through a number of focus questions. Skillnet Ireland has limited its submission to those questions in which it can add the most value, insight, and expertise – namely question 4(a) under section 4.2 Jobs and Skills.

## Response

**4(a) 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.**

Talent is at the very forefront of the green transition and the collective task for Government, industry and workers is to develop the array of necessary green skills for a low-carbon future. Skillnet Ireland is engaging widely with industry to develop the skills framework that will boost Ireland's capacity to accelerate the green transformation, build sustainable businesses and fuel sustainable innovation through our Skillnet Business Networks and national upskilling initiatives. Areas of focus include energy management, sustainable finance, onshore and offshore wind, water stewardship, biodiversity, efficiency in building systems and the circular economy.

**Green Tech Skillnet**, promoted by Wind Energy Ireland, was established in 2014 to support the workforce development needs of businesses within the renewable energy and green technology sectors. It is a business network for companies of all sizes. Network companies work collaboratively to share best practice and to respond effectively to the specific skills needs of the sector.

Reflecting the diversification of Ireland's energy system and with an overarching responsibility to EU targets and the mitigation of climate change, the network supports the optimisation of renewables on the Irish grid in the short, medium, and long term through learning and development initiatives.

Skillnet Ireland is developing and delivering a range of programmes in order to build the pipeline of Offshore Wind Talent needed for the offshore wind energy opportunity, ranging from technical programmes in solar and wind installation, to energy storage, to planning, finance, and accredited programmes for wind turbine technicians.

The **Offshore Development and Consenting** programme provides a comprehensive overview of offshore wind energy development in Ireland, encompassing market updates, planning policies, transportation, site selection, environmental considerations, metocean data, and geo-surveys.

Green Tech Skillnet's **Wind Turbine Technician** training programme is aimed at people with electrical, mechanical, or engineering backgrounds, and enables participants to become a fully certified Wind Turbine Technician to Global Wind Organisation standard in 5 weeks. Over 70 people have become a fully certified Wind Turbine Technician since the programme launched in 2021.

Green Tech Skillnet has furthermore developed a **Work in Wind** (Graduate Level) training and work-placement programme that enables participants to explore a career path in the wind sector in areas such as Renewable Policy, Renewable Planning, Grid Transmission and Energy Market Trading, Community Engagement and more. Since the programme launched in 2021, it has supported over 90 people to choose a career in wind.

## **New National Offshore Wind Scheme**

Skillnet Ireland, Green Tech Skillnet and Wind Energy Ireland collaborated on the publication of an offshore wind skills analysis report - ['Building our Potential: Ireland's Offshore Wind Skills and Talent Needs'](#) - which was launched at the Wind Energy Ireland Annual Conference in January 2024.

The report serves as a roadmap to maximise Ireland's domestic capabilities across the entire offshore wind lifecycle and outlines the roles and skills most likely to be required to enable Ireland to capitalise on the unique opportunity that offshore energy presents. The report also highlights how vital it is to ensure that workers with relevant skills have the capacity to work offshore, by enabling and accelerating their ability to obtain suitable, internationally recognised qualifications, such as offshore safety courses approved by the Global Wind Organisation and other authoritative bodies.

In response to this report, Skillnet Ireland, with the support of Wind Energy Ireland and key industry players, is leading on the development of a proposed new National Offshore Wind Upskilling Initiative to address the skills and workforce requirements of the sector. The scheme specifically aims to facilitate career mobility for experienced, mid-level career professionals, whose skills and strengths are transferable to the offshore wind sector through suitable upskilling. The scheme is currently in scoping phase, and its delivery will be subject to available funding.

In addition to this, Green Tech Skillnet will launch an online platform later in 2024 which will bring the report's details into a visual and interactive experience in order to signpost and promote learning pathways required by the offshore wind sector.

## **Conclusion**

A key tenet of the aforementioned report is the importance of an industry-led approach to skills development. Skillnet Ireland's co-creation model plays a vital role in facilitating engagement between industry and the tertiary education sector to develop cutting-edge programmes designed to meet future skills needs across a range of sectors. Co-created programmes are delivered at varying NFQ levels, ranging from postgraduate programmes to specialist micro-credentials.

Engaging enterprise in the design of new upskilling programmes and new educational qualifications, including the re-design of existing programmes, will be critical to ensure Ireland's talent pipeline is appropriately skilled to meet the needs of companies working within the offshore wind sector, and which can equip students, learners, researchers, and innovators with the necessary skills to progress in their chosen specialisms and pathways, and facilitate better employment outcomes in this emerging field.