



Tionól Réigiúnach
an Deiscirt

Southern Regional
Assembly

Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt

Teach an Tionóil,
Sráid Uí Chonaill,
Pórt Láirge,

Éire.

Southern Regional Assembly

Assembly House,
O'Connell Street,
Waterford,

Ireland.

Future Framework consultation
Offshore Environment and Future Development
Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
29-31 Adelaide Road
Dublin 2
D02 X285
FutureFrameworkpublicconsultation@decc.gov.ie

19th February 2024

Re: Submission to the offshore renewable energy (ORE) Future Framework Policy Statement

A Chara,

The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) welcome the opportunity to engage with this Consultation.

The SRA's submission is based on the Region's priorities as set out in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). The RSES sets a 12-year statutory strategic planning and economic development framework for future economic, spatial, and social development and aims for the Southern Region to become one of Europe's most "Creative and Innovative", "Liveable" and "Greenest" Regions. The RSES is a key component of the implementation of the Project Ireland 2040 process and the development of the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) sector provides a significant opportunity to achieve national and regional objectives for balanced regional development including the achievement of the 50:50 split in growth between the Eastern and Midlands Region (EMRA) and the Northern & Western Region and Southern Region identified as core national policy in the National Planning Framework.

The RSES provides significant support through Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs)¹ for the ORE sector. In addition, the RSES supports growth in marine economic clusters, sustainable development of our Region's port and harbour infrastructure and multi modal connectivity between ports for freight and supply chain logistics. Such support seeks the sector to grow at scale, drive regional economic growth

¹ <http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Southern%20Regional%20Assembly%20RSES%202020%20High%20Res.pdf>



and retain the economic potential of the sector within the Region. Support for our marine economy and transition to a net zero carbon energy future is a priority for RSES implementation² and reflected in our recent submissions to National Industrial Strategy for Offshore Wind³, OREDP II⁴ and DMAP for the South Coast⁵. The SRA welcome this consultation and request that we are consulted as a key stakeholder throughout the preparation of the Policy Statement.

This submission by the SRA is structured around the relevant questions set out in the consultation document.

1.0 Pathway to success

1. (a) 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?

Section 1.2 of the consultation document does a very good job of identifying the key priorities for ORE delivery in Ireland. The section includes reference to Environmental Concerns, Public and Stakeholder consultations, Return to State and Local Communities, Cost Competitiveness, Delivery of Targets, Availability of Relevant Data, Technology and Supply Chain Development, and Industrial Alignment including Infrastructure and Ports.

The section should also include delivery of **balanced regional growth** and alignment with national planning policy and regional spatial and economic strategies as a priority. This builds upon the consideration of ‘industrial alignment’ in the consultation document, which highlights the need for ORE project sites to be located within economic distance of key onshore and offshore infrastructure.

Including this priority will align with the opportunities for ORE in Ireland. A recent report⁶ to the House of the Oireachtas (March 2023) on the delivery of offshore renewable energy recommended that Ireland adopt a multi-port approach and will need to build, on a phased basis, around four standard ORE port facilities (each capable of building 500 MW of ORE annually) that will act as construction and deployment ports over the next 25 – 30 years. In addition, several smaller ports will be required for ORE operation and maintenance activities.

The close interaction of economic corridors (Atlantic Economic Corridor and Eastern Corridor), our Cities and Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford, network of Key Towns and their proximity and interactions with the maritime area and ports where landside ORE activities can concentrate, can facilitate balanced regional growth.

To achieve this priority future ORE development must be supported by growing, infrastructure ready metropolitan areas and Key Towns that are attractive for the ORE industry. The enterprise activity generated by the ORE industry should coalesce within these urban centres close to Ports. It is a potential win-win opportunity for supporting ORE development and economic development, vibrancy,

² <http://www.southernassembly.ie/regional-planning/two-year-report-progress-report>

³ [Submission to National Industrial Strategy for Offshore Wind](#)

⁴ [SRA Submission to OREDP II 20-4-23-Final .pdf \(southernassembly.ie\)](#)

⁵ <http://www.southernassembly.ie/regional-planning/sra-consultation-submissions>

⁶ [Report on Offshore Renewable Energy \(oireachtas.ie\)](#)



and employment opportunities in our Region's settlements. It's important that such development is plan led, integrated with land use transport planning for sustainable mobility and provides an opportunity for economic growth in our settlements. This will reinforce the likelihood of success in delivering upon our ORE targets and ensuring our Region is an attractive place to live, work, and play.

There are many **complementary policies, plans, and commitments** to action across enterprise development, the port sector, freight sector, transport sector, renewable energy sector inter alia. Central, regional, and local government are working on parallel initiatives to support the sector's growth. There is a danger that the complementarity between different sector and agency actions isn't shared or capitalised upon. This is especially important for positive alignment in planning for activities in the maritime area and adjacent landside activities to enable the maritime activity (connections especially). It is positive that the consultation document includes references many of these policies, plans, and commitments.

RSES implementation initiatives can support the Future Framework including the 'Regional Renewable Energy Strategy Roadmap and Strategy', being developed in conjunction with the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and SEAI under the Climate Action Plan, and a case study on 'Decarbonisation in the Region' which is being conducted with support from ESPON (EU Programme conducting EU territorial analysis). This supporting work highlights the importance of recognising the complementary policies, plans and commitments as a priority to deliver on the strategic opportunity and Policy Statement.

Recommendations:

1. Include Balanced Regional Growth as a priority and adopt a whole of government approach across complementary policies, strategies and plans that will support growth of the sector (National Ports Policy, Designated Maritime Area Plans, National Hydrogen Strategy, All Island Rail Review, Regional Freight Strategies inter alia).
2. The development of the Policy Statement should take account of recent SRA submissions on OREDP II, South Coast DMAP, and the National Industrial Strategy for Offshore Wind.
3. Support RSES implementation initiatives including the 'Regional Renewable Energy Strategy Roadmap and Strategy'.

2.0 Jobs and Skills

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.

The RSES supports the development of a Learning Region and seeks a collaborative approach to regional skills development, aligned to the needs and opportunities of regional economies. Consistent with these objectives, a significant strengthening is needed in our higher and further education sectors at regional level. With the support of the State, Higher Education Institutes, Further Education, learning



and skills development through Regional Skills Forums can nurture ORE research and innovation, enterprise creation, skills, and talent to grow the sector.

To further assist in the development of the skills and workforce pipeline for ORE, the State should facilitate regional approaches to Smart Specialisation (S3). S3 focuses on measures to improve the regions attractiveness as a location for national and foreign investment and aims to increase entrepreneurial activity. The National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027 and the SRA's 'Regional Approach for development of a Smart Specialisation Strategy in the Southern Region'⁷ prepared with BABLE GmbH highlight that ORE is a priority area for the region based on its resources and existing research and innovation ecosystem.

Through support of the initiatives delivered through the SRA, jobs and skills could be encouraged to coalesce around ORE, supported by policy through S3 initiatives and capacity built through learning region supports.

Recommendations:

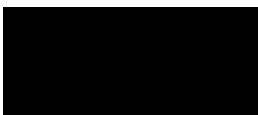
1. Invest in our Region's Higher and Further Education Institutes and skills development (recommendations of the SRA's Towards a Learning Region) to grow employment opportunities in the sector.
2. The Policy Statement should seek to align with national and regional S3 to facilitate regional activeness and increase entrepreneurial activity.

3.0 Conclusion

The SRA welcome this opportunity to make this submission. The ORE sector is a significant opportunity for regional economic development in addition to achieving our national target for a zero-carbon energy system by 2050 to meet our Climate Action commitments. The recommendations on the Future Framework Policy Statement aim to highlight the Region's opportunities, support the consultation process, and facilitate ORE development in the Region.

The SRA welcome follow up consultation and look forward to further engagement on the Policy Statement.

Mise le meas,



, Southern Regional Assembly

⁷ [SRA S3 Final Report.pdf \(southernassembly.ie\)](#)