

***IEA Submission: Second Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan
(OREDP II)***

*Irish Exporters Association submission to the Department of Environment,
Climate and Communications*

25th April 2023

The Irish Exporters Association

The Irish Exporters Association (IEA) is the leading independent representative body and voice for exporters based in Ireland. The IEA represents exporters and supply chain operators across the country and works at regional, national, and European level, representing its members in front of legislators to create a regulatory and legislative framework that supports, drives, and fosters Irish exports.

We assist our members to grow their exports to world markets and drive the growth and development of all exporting businesses based in Ireland. We provide a set of highly relevant business services and products to assist our members with international trade.

The IEA represents the whole spectrum of companies within the export industry including SME's who are beginning to think about exporting for the first time right through to global multinational companies who are already extensively exporting from Ireland as well as the providers of key services to the sector. The IEA is the connecting force for Irish exporters, providing practical knowledge and support across the Island of Ireland and in foreign markets.

Overview

The Irish Exporters Association expresses concerns over the Government's proposed Renewable Energy Development Plan II. While we support decarbonisation targets, the IEA and our members are concerned about the long-term security of energy supply. New Government regulations will require all future offshore windfarms to be built in "Designated Marine Areas", but these have yet to be identified and may not be identified for a further 18 to 24 months. This policy change seriously hinders projects underway in now non-designated areas and will only create further obstacles for the development of an offshore wind industry across Ireland.

Ireland has the potential to become a net exporter of renewable energy, but clarity is now required from Government on the proposed policy on how it will support investment. It is crucial that supports are made available to allow for innovative solutions in the development of floating offshore wind turbine platforms. However, the IEA is concerned that this draft plan is not flexible enough to account for the ever-developing dynamic technology environment which it is attempting to regulate.

The IEA seconds the recommendation of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment that a State Body be established to develop and engage on offshore wind energy – this could be further supported by the creation of an offshore delivery taskforce to enable the State to deliver on its Climate 2030 targets.

The IEA is gravely concerned about the findings of Wind Energy Ireland’s National Port Study which found Belfast Harbour is the only port on the island of Ireland that is ready to be used to construct offshore wind farms. This casts significant doubt on the government’s goals of increasing offshore wind capacity to seven gigawatts by 2030 without more ports capable of building offshore wind projects. The development of port infrastructure is important also in that in itself it will encourage the creation and growth of new industries, expertise and employment in the supply chain of offshore wind. We risk losing this potential to the already considerable port infrastructure in the UK.

We cannot build 7 GW of offshore wind energy by the end of 2030 if we only have a single port on the island suitable for building offshore wind farms. We need to be able to build more than one offshore wind project at the same time if we are to have any chance to deliver the carbon emissions cuts that the Government wants, and that climate action requires.

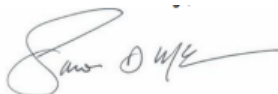
The IEA urges Government, particularly the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to instruct An Bord Pleanála to prioritise planning applications related to renewable energy, including port infrastructure. Ports and developers both want this to happen. Ireland can be a base from which to build a generation of fixed-bottom and floating wind energy projects, creating thousands of jobs and ensuring that investment stays in Ireland. What disappoints and concerns us the most is the complete lack of a sense of urgency in moving forward these critical strategic projects. It seems we have moved on very little in the last 12 years and we strongly advocate the need for all State actors to be accelerate their activities both individually and centrally.

Conclusion

The Irish Exporters Association would like to thank the Department for the opportunity to feed into its consultation on the second Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (ORED II). The IEA has actively and constructively worked with the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and stands ready to continue this engagement.

On behalf of the IEA,

Simon McKeever



Chief Executive

25.04.23