

31st July 2025

To whom it concerns,

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the draft Marine Planning Policy Statement.

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members together employing 130,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area and county. Our vision is to lead a transforming and ambitious Cork city and county, and our purpose is to unite, represent and support our members and community. Our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Cork Chamber has also been designated an SDG Champion by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment for 2024 – 2025.

Cork Chamber's advocacy efforts are guided by the views and priorities of our partners, and are shaped by our continuous engagement with members, our board and key stakeholders in Cork city and county.

Sustainability and the development of renewable energy are key priority areas for Cork Chamber members. With developments in offshore wind underway as part of the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (SC-DMAP) in the region, it is particularly critical that the development of maritime infrastructure off Ireland's south coast is prioritised and progressed as quickly as possible.

With 1,200 km of coastline, Co. Cork has one of the country's longest coastlines. The region has a rich maritime heritage, and many key sectors with an interest in the marine sector, including energy, ICT, tourism and exporters across various sectors, have a strong presence in Cork.

As noted in the policy statement, effective long-term planning for the maritime area is a driving force in securing a sustainable development path for many of these sectors.

Sustainability and biodiversity considerations must also be front of mind in all planning for the marine sector, alongside enhanced climate resilience and protections for Ireland's marine area and coastlines.

The growth of new sectors in the maritime space, such as offshore renewable energy, demands a plan-led approach to marine planning policy with clear procedures and roles in place for the many state bodies and agencies involved in the regulation of Ireland's vast maritime jurisdiction.

Since the publication of the previous Marine Planning Policy Statement in 2019, the offshore renewables sector has evolved considerably. Developments like the advancement of Phase One offshore projects, alongside progress towards realisation of offshore wind ambitions through the

SC-DMAP, as well as the recently announced National DMAP are welcome, but require comprehensive forward planning and ongoing collaboration among stakeholders.

Progress in offshore wind is critical to Ireland's climate action efforts, as well as long-term prosperity, providing much-needed certainty regarding energy independence and security of supply. As noted in the policy statement, the security of Ireland's maritime area should also be prioritised in this regard. It is vital that offshore wind assets are afforded sufficient security protections as they are developed, alongside ongoing protection for existing energy assets, including critical gas interconnectors.

With ambitious targets set out in Powering Prosperity - Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy and the Future Framework for Offshore Renewable Energy, it is vital that cooperation and alignment between state bodies, developers and other stakeholders involved in the development process are prioritised and facilitated by government.

With responsibility for the development of offshore renewables divided between a number of state and semi-state bodies, including the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and the Department of Climate, Energy and Environment, as well as An Coimisiún Pleanála and MARA, and utility providers like EirGrid, it is critical that cooperation is facilitated and encouraged at all levels and all stages of the planning and development processes.

Existing stakeholder groupings such as the Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce and the Government Industry Forum on Offshore Renewable Energy should be developed further in this regard, and additional regional engagement should also be prioritised to ensure that local stakeholders are included when relevant. This is particularly important in regions where the development of offshore renewables is progressing apace, such as the region in counties Cork and Waterford surrounding the SC-DMAP.

In 2024, Cork Chamber established the Cork Offshore Renewable Industry Forum (CORIF) to support industry engagement and collaboration by bringing together key industry representatives in the Cork region to identify and advocate for the critical policy and infrastructure enablers needed for Cork to realise its potential as Ireland's first national hub for the renewable energy industry.

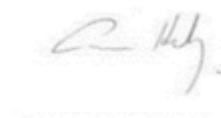
Cork is well-positioned to become the first of the national hubs to support the renewable energy sector, supporting a thriving offshore renewable industry nationwide. Cork benefits from a long and distinguished history in the energy sector, with many of the key industry players already established in the region.

Cork is also home to key education and research institutions, such as the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI) and the MaREI Centre, and therefore should be identified as the preferred location for a green energy skills hub or centre of excellence for the offshore wind sector. MTU, UCC and Cork ETB are already working together to enhance the region's educational offering in this sector: in July 2025, they collaborated to launch the Maritime Safe Pass Pilot Programme. In addition, the Port of Cork has commenced infrastructure development to facilitate offshore wind with the berth construction set to be finished this autumn. It is the only port in Ireland with the planning permission for infrastructure to support ORE.

While the Cork region has a significant role to play in maritime development over the coming years, it is important to acknowledge the national landscape. A plan-led approach from regional to national level will help to ensure that regions work to develop offshore wind and other maritime resources in a complementary manner.

In summary, Cork Chamber welcomes the stated aims of the Marine Planning Policy Statement to facilitate development on a plan-led basis, with regard to economic and environmental implications, in particular. Alignment with terrestrial planning, such as documents like the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan, and among all relevant stakeholders is also vital to ensure that developments and other initiatives in which involve the maritime sector take place in a coordinated way.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C. Healy', is positioned above a faint, light-colored rectangular stamp or watermark.

Conor Healy

CEO