Green Growth Public Consultation – Cork Chamber Submission

1. Which specific actions in Powering Prosperity – Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy were most impactful or effective? Could similar actions be applied to support other green technologies? Please identify the action(s) and, where possible, provide evidence or examples to support your view.

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. At Cork Chamber, our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the UN SDGs, five of which have been identified as priority areas by the Chambers Ireland network. Cork Chamber has also recently been appointed an SDG Ambassador by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment.

Our advocacy is shaped by the views and priorities of our partners, and is informed by our continuous engagement with members, our Board and key stakeholders in Cork city and county. The energy system is a key priority area for Cork Chamber members, critical to enabling future economic and population growth, as well as leading the transition to climate neutrality.

Cork Chamber also coordinates the work of the Cork Offshore Renewable Industry Forum (CORIF), which brings together representatives of the offshore renewable energy industry in the Cork region to advocate for the critical policy and infrastructural enablers needed to facilitate the sector's growth and realise the associated social and economic benefits for Cork and Ireland as a whole.

Since the introduction of Powering Prosperity, there has been some welcome progress towards the development of offshore wind and the achievement of the strategy's 2030 targets. While certain Phase One projects have progressed, alongside recent progress towards the development of the first site, Tonn Nua, as part of the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP), national progress has been slower, with the new National DMAP not likely to be finalised until late 2027 at the earliest.

Progress has also been made on actions to support the realisation of the many economic benefits associated with the development of offshore wind. Recent government initiatives such as the Large Energy User Action Plan (LEAP), containing aims to co-locate renewables supply with industry in new Green Energy Parks, are particularly welcome in this regard, helping to translate these economic ambitions into concrete steps towards a more sustainable economic future.

While some progress has been made towards Powering Prosperity's aims of leveraging relevant funding and support opportunities to support the offshore wind sector and

related supply chain, further work should be done to ensure that sufficient funding and advisory supports are readily available to support firms of all sizes in their involvement in the offshore renewable energy sector and the scaling up of their activities.

In addition, there has been some welcome progress in the area of green skills, with a number of new courses and micro-credentials in the area of offshore wind being made available in recent years via Skillnet Ireland's Offshore Wind Academy, for example, and Springboard-funded courses such as UCC's certificate in Offshore Renewable Energy. These represent a welcome step towards bridging the skills gap that exists in the green energy sector, however continued investment and resourcing for green skills courses, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level, as well as opportunities for upskilling and reskilling, will be vital to ensure the sector continues to be supported as it expands.

Powering Prosperity's aim to develop an Offshore Wind Centre of Excellence has not yet been achieved, and it is vital that this is progressed swiftly to support the sector's growth. Consideration should be given to Cork as a location for the proposed Centre of Excellence, given the region's existing energy ecosystem and heritage, as well as the presence of complementary educational offerings through the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI) and UCC's MaREI Centre.

2. Noting the broad set of technology areas mentioned previously, are there particular green technologies related to the energy system that Ireland should focus on to meet climate targets and maximise economic opportunities from the green transition?

Ensuring that the growth of green technology and innovations is supported insofar as possible is critical to realising both the climate and economic goals a thriving green sector can bring. Supporting green enterprises to access existing incentives in the first instance is critical to support the integration of green technologies into the broader economy. Initiatives like the R&D Tax Credit are important in this regard and should be recognised by the Strategy, building on Powering Prosperity's aim to promote R&D opportunities and ensure appropriate support mechanisms for the sector are in place.

Furthermore, ensuring an appropriate mix of renewable energy, including wind, solar, hydrogen and biomethane, is critical to the development of a stable and competitive green economy. Ireland's broader economic competitiveness increasingly depends on the country's ability to guarantee security of supply and reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels. In the current climate of rising geopolitical tensions and uncertainties in global trade, supporting the growth of an appropriate mix of renewables at a domestic level is critically important.

Although the aim of the new Strategy to expand focus beyond offshore wind is welcome, it is critical that offshore wind continues to receive the support it requires as a burgeoning sector of the economy. A holistic approach that integrates broader renewable energy development within the context of Ireland's economic and sustainability goals would be welcome.

The proposed inclusion of green hydrogen is also welcome and should be considered in relation to the parallel development of offshore wind and other technologies. The strategy should include recognition of the various roles that can be played by green hydrogen to fully harnessing renewable production in Ireland, including: reducing the level of dispatch down of renewable generation; providing a direct or indirect route to market for renewable generation; meeting the energy requirements of hard to abate sectors; and storing energy at scale for use when needed.

Commented [CM1]: Mention that the hydrogen sector also needs government support to develop the technology. As Irving oil the only refinery in Ireland a test centre should be located in Whitegate

In the short to medium term, government must prioritise supports for the green hydrogen sector to facilitate the development of the necessary technology required to unlock the full potential of green hydrogen in the years to come. With Ireland's only oil refinery located in Whitegate, Co. Cork, there is an opportunity to pilot the utilisation of green hydrogen and associated technologies in the region, supporting broader decarbonisation goals.

Finally, striking the right balance between reusing and redeploying existing infrastructure to serve more sustainable purposes, as well as developing new infrastructure at pace where necessary is important. Existing critical infrastructure, such as the gas network for example, can often be redeployed to support more renewable energy sources, such as biomethane and hydrogen. Such repurposing has the additional benefit of supporting Ireland's broader sustainability and circular economy goals.

3. Which of these technologies do you consider need additional support in terms of supply chain development? What part of the supply chain requires support? Please note the relevant technology/technologies and provide evidence to support this.

With regard to supply chain development, emerging sectors such as green hydrogen and biomethane will likely require most support over the coming years. To ensure that Ireland can deliver on its renewable energy targets in a timely manner, government must ensure that the growth of the required supply chain is fully supported in the initial phase of growth to facilitate the acceleration of renewable energy generation. Continued supports for the offshore wind supply chain will be important too as the sector continues to grow, particularly if we are to meet the ambitious climate targets set out at both national and EU level.

4. Which of these technologies do you consider need additional support in terms of broad/system research, development and innovation and in-company RD&I? Are there specific barriers to innovation or R&D in these sectors that Government could help address? Please note the relevant technology/technologies and provide evidence to support this.

Similarly, these key emerging sectors should also be prioritised for additional support in term of broad/system research, development and innovation and in-company RD&I. Supporting these sectors to grow and innovate through targeted research and innovation supports and broader system supports should also be prioritised, ensuring these sectors receive sufficient, ongoing support as they continue to grow. Offering advisory supports to help interested stakeholders access broader enterprise and economic supports, such as the R&D Tax Credit and Enterprise Ireland supports, should also be prioritised in this regard.

5. Which of these technologies do you consider need additional support in terms of industrial deployment? Please note the relevant technology/technologies and provide evidence to support this.

In terms of industrial development, the new Strategy's aims should be aligned to existing policy frameworks, including recent initiatives like LEAP in particular, as well as broader economic and demographic growth projections, such as those contained in the National Development Plan and National Planning Framework. With LEAP setting out aims to develop Green Energy Parks, co-locating renewable supply with industrial development, it is critical that supports for the development of renewable energy are considered within the broader lens of economic growth and development. Consideration should also be given to the strategic plans of other state agencies under the remit of the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment in this regard, such as Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland.

6. What are the main barriers to scaling renewable energy and green technologies in Ireland (e.g. regulatory, skills, infrastructure, finance)?

The current regulatory and compliance burden associated with the execution of renewable energy projects often necessitates the procurement of external service providers to assist with compliance, incurring considerable additional costs and time expenditure for developers. This can have an adverse impact on investor confidence and potentially dissuade future investors and FDI. Consideration should be given to aligning the new Strategy with government initiatives such as the Accelerating Infrastructure

Action Plan, with aims to reduce compliance burdens to support the acceleration of infrastructural developments in the green energy sector.

Uncertainty regarding government planning and development timelines also has a detrimental impact on developers' ability to plan strategically and future-proof their operations. In the area of offshore wind for example, uncertainty remains around the proposed development and route to market for the remaining South Coast DMAP sites following the conclusion of the Tonn Nua auction in late 2025.

Infrastructure remains a key challenge too, and continued investment in supporting infrastructure in a timely manner that enables the future growth of renewable energy is of critical importance. Alongside large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Celtic Interconnector and investments in grid upgrades to support capacity as renewables come onstream, investment must also continue in ports and other transport infrastructure to support related logistics requirements.

7. Are there particular interventions from the Government or State agencies that should be considered to support the development of green technologies in Ireland? Are there existing supports that should be expanded or improved?

Supporting the development of green technologies in Ireland must be considered through the broader lens of economic growth and competitiveness, as well as FDI retention and attraction and supports for indigenous enterprises. With this in mind, existing government supports for innovation, such as the R&D Tax Credit, have an important role to play, alongside existing Enterprise Ireland supports, for example. Ensuring that there is a clear pathway for those involved in green technologies to find out about and access these supports is critical. Consideration should be given to dedicating specific channels for grant applications to green technologies, for example, in order to expedite such processes to support the achievement of key climate targets on time.

Government should also consider building on these supports to further enhance innovation, through collaborations with education and research institutions for example, or additional opportunities for regulatory sandboxes to explore particular ideas or innovations in the green technology sector. Support for pilot projects to explore new industries, for example floating offshore wind projects, should also be prioritised.

8. Are there existing supports that should be expanded or improved?

As above.

9. Are there aligned sectors of the economy that this new industrial strategy should be seeking to support and develop to support our renewable energy and green transition ambitions?

Ensuring alignment with broader developments across education, research and innovation in the first instance is critical to future-proof the sector's growth and provide certainty for prospective investors and developers that Ireland can provide a talent pool of work-ready, skilled graduates in the sector.

In addition, the new industrial strategy should prioritise alignment with economic projections, particularly those related to sectors with a high concentration of Large Energy Users (LEUs). LEUs already play an important role in the domestic economy and ensuring security of supply for existing and future connections is critical to the continued attraction and retention of FDI across key sectors, including technology.

With this in mind, the new Strategy should seek to build on CRU's recently published LEU Connection Policy, as well as LEAP, while also giving consideration to potential upcoming developments such as the Private Wires Bill. Integrating policy aims and developments across government and state agencies will be essential to facilitate timely industrial engagement and necessary infrastructure delivery to safeguard existing economic activity and chart a course for future growth and investment. Alongside close cooperation with Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland, the Department could also consider expanding collaboration with local business representative organisations, including Chambers of Commerce, to ensure that national policy aims reflect the economic reality on the ground, particularly in regional locations.

Collaboration with key energy sector stakeholders, including EirGrid and ESB Networks, is also critical to ensure that economic growth is aligned to current and future energy network capacity projections, and that areas where there is sufficient capacity to support new connections are well-identified and considered in government planning for future investment.

10. How can companies in these complementary sectors be identified and encouraged to broaden their work to include renewable energy and or green technologies?

Ireland is home to a thriving innovation and start-up ecosystem across a wide variety of sectors. Ensuring continued support for and engagement with early-stage start-ups, incubator hubs and key educational institutions is an important first step to identifying emerging firms who may have a role to play in the renewable energy or green technology space.

Furthermore, continued collaboration and engagement across government departments, state agencies is critical to ensure effective and timely identification of opportunities for cross-collaboration. Support for collaboration, through cluster networks or local stakeholder groups, should also be prioritised to encourage the development of an innovative, collaborative ecosystem for companies operating in related industries.

11. Based on your experience, are there industrial development policy interventions from other countries that you consider particularly effective?

N/A

12. If so, how might similar approaches be adapted to the Irish context?

N/A

13. How can Ireland ensure that SMEs are well placed to participate in the development and deployment of green technologies related to the energy system in Ireland? Please note this is distinct from companies decarbonising or becoming more sustainable in their current practices and processes.

Many firms, particularly SMEs and start-ups, are limited in their resources and financing. Ensuring that effective government programmes are in place to help firms identify opportunities to participate in the development and deployment of green technologies in the first instance is vital; advisory services that are easily accessible to firms at a local level should be prioritised.

In addition, while many companies may be ready and willing to play their part in the green transition by dedicating resources to the development and deployment of green technologies, financial constraints are often a barrier to what can be achieved in the sector by such firms. Ensuring that grant opportunities are accessible, with streamlined and coordinated application processes and timelines where possible, is absolutely critical. Consideration should also be given to the expansion of current support structures to ensure green technologies are prioritised for R&D and innovation supports, while also ensuring that sufficient resources remain available for other key areas of R&D.

14. How should Ireland monitor the development of these green technologies and identify emerging technologies and sectors in the future?

With Ireland preparing to assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2026, there is an opportunity to prioritise the progression of green technologies at European level. Many other EU Member States have much more advanced green energy and technology sectors, presenting an opportunity for Ireland to learn from their experiences, avoid their mistakes where possible, and accelerate green technology development.

Alongside the monitoring of developments in other countries, collaboration with neighbouring countries should also be prioritised to leverage opportunities for collaboration on projects of shared interest as they arise. Engagement with UK counterparts is particularly important in this regard.

Prioritising ongoing engagement at ministerial and civil service level will be crucial as the sector develops, however opportunities for industrial engagement across borders should be identified and supported insofar as possible. Such an approach would enable those working in the sector in Ireland to exchange ideas and share learnings with those working at a more advanced stage of development and sectoral growth in other jurisdictions, supporting further innovation.

15. Is there anything else you would advise DETE to consider in developing this new industrial strategy?

With many sectors of the green economy still in their infancy in Ireland, there is a clear opportunity at present to integrate the green transition with sustainable economic growth and the digital innovation that is central to a more competitive economy. Ensuring that the new Strategy is closely aligned with economic growth aims, particularly in the area of competitiveness as set out in government's Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity, is crucial to realising the vision of a sustainable, green and prosperous future economy.

Consideration should also be given to the distinct opportunities that exist at local and regional level across Ireland. In Cork, for example, considerable work has been done by local stakeholders to achieve the EU Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission Label. Exploring opportunities to integrate national green growth aims with developments at local level, encouraging regional investment and economic development, should be a key focus.

In addition, local initiatives such as the Local Green Deals in Cork, a collaboration between Cork City Council and Cork Chamber, support businesses in developing tailored climate action plans aligned with national and EU climate aims. Government should consider engaging with existing initiatives like this, with a view to supporting the continued deployment of green technologies at local level and identifying opportunities

to scale up projects to national level and support interested businesses across the country in engaging with the green transition.