

National or European strategic or policy objectives Compliance Details

Introduction

A defined and established policy hierarchy exists - from national to local levels – that supports port capacity at Tier 1 ports, and which supporting offshore renewable energy and recognising the vital role of Tier 1 ports, particularly Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC), in enabling this transition to achieving climate targets and facilitating large-scale ORE deployment.

The Shannon Estuary, especially the Port of Foynes and Foynes Island, is identified as a strategic location for infrastructure that supports ORE. The proposed development aligns with both national policy and the Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce’s “critical path” period (2023–2029) aimed at preparing the region for commercial-scale offshore energy projects.

Key elements of National policy and programmes are set out under various sectoral headings below.

National Climate Action & Offshore Renewable Energy Policy Objectives

- **Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021**

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 commits Ireland to a legally binding framework targeting net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with a 51% reduction by 2030. The Act sets out clear sectoral measures to achieve national, EU, and international climate obligations.

- **Climate Action Plan 2024 (‘CAP24’)**

CAP24 is the third annual update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan, outlining the Government’s roadmap for transitioning to clean energy. It sets a key target of at least 5GW of electricity from offshore wind by 2030, supporting the broader goal of sourcing 80% of electricity from renewables by that date. The Plan promotes the accelerated development of offshore renewable energy (ORE), particularly offshore wind, to drive decarbonisation, transform energy systems, and build a circular and bio-based economy. It recognises that maritime and port infrastructure, underpinned through the plan-led system through the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (MAP) and the Marine Area Consent (MAC) process, is central to achieving Ireland’s immediate ORE target of 7GW and the longer-term goal of 37GW by 2050, while ensuring marine biodiversity protection.

- **National Policy Statement on the Facilitation of Offshore Renewable Energy by Commercial Ports in Ireland, 2021**

In anticipation of the updated National Ports Policy, the Department, in collaboration with the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO), assessed how Irish commercial State ports can support the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) sector. The statement recognises the critical role of ports—including SFPC—in providing large-scale infrastructure for ORE deployment, particularly in deepwater areas like the southwest coast, as identified in the forthcoming OREDP II.

- **Future Framework for Offshore Renewable Energy Policy Statement 2024**

This Policy Statement outlines Ireland's long-term, plan-led approach to developing ORE. Aligned with existing climate and energy policies, it sets out key actions, future directions, and intergovernmental coordination to support national ORE goals. It highlights the essential role of port infrastructure—particularly state commercial ports—in enabling the construction, storage, transport, and maintenance of ORE components, emphasizing year-round access and strategic proximity for efficient project delivery.

- **Offshore Wind Energy Taskforce**

Established in 2023, the Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce oversees the implementation of Ireland's Offshore Wind Energy Programme. Its mission is to coordinate and accelerate the rollout of 5GW of offshore wind by 2030, contributing to the broader goal of meeting up to 80% of electricity demand from renewables by that date

- **Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce**

Formed in 2022 under the Programme for Government, this independent Taskforce was tasked with assessing the economic and environmental development potential of the Shannon Estuary.

Recognising the Estuary's natural deep-water assets and strategic location, the Taskforce aligns its vision with the EU Green Deal and Ireland's ambition to deliver 30GW of offshore wind from the Atlantic by 2050.

The 2023 report describes this as “the single greatest opportunity for sustainable economic growth in Ireland's history,” recommending significant infrastructure investment to establish a world-class renewable energy hub. The taskforce report sets out a 27 year ‘critical path’ to assist in the realisation and delivery of these strategic national and regional renewable energy objectives (‘The Shannon Estuary Critical Path to 30GW by 2050’). The current period (i.e. 2023-2029) is a 7-year period in which it has described as “Preparation for Commercialisation”. This period intends to facilitate the necessary site investigation design, consent and procurement process for delivery of port infrastructure essential to assist the practical realisation and implementation of ORE development prior to the “Commercialisation” stage scheduled for 2029.

Spatial Development Port Planning Policy Objectives

National Government Policy

- **National Ports Policy 2013**

The National Ports Policy (2013) outlines the strategic role of Irish commercial ports in trade and infrastructure. Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC), as a Tier 1 Port of National Significance, is recognised as critical to national trade and economic development. The policy explicitly supports SFPC's continued commercial growth, noting its importance in servicing offshore renewable energy (ORE) and ensuring future port capacity to meet national energy needs.

- **Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework & Revised National Development Plan 2021–2030**

Project Ireland 2040 combines the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP). NPF supports renewable energy expansion and highlights the dependency on enabling infrastructure like ports and grids. The NDP commits to substantial investment in indigenous supply chains and port infrastructure to realise Ireland's ORE ambitions.

- **National Marine Planning Framework (2021)**

The NMPF is Ireland's first comprehensive marine spatial plan. It supports offshore renewable energy development through specific policies encouraging infrastructure that supports emerging technologies. It prioritises land-based coastal infrastructure and explicitly recognises the pivotal role of ports in facilitating ORE, including floating offshore wind.

- **Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA) & OREDPII (Draft 2023)**

OREDPII aims to establish a high-level spatial framework for long-term ORE development. SFPC has engaged with this draft, advocating for alignment between marine and terrestrial planning frameworks. It stresses that Tier 1 ports like SFPC must be factored into spatial planning to enable scalable ORE deployment.

Regional Government Policy & Programmes

- **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) 2019–2031**

RSES identifies the Shannon Estuary and SFPC as strategic economic drivers. Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) support ORE development and the enhancement of SFPC infrastructure. Specific objectives (RPOs 99, 100, 146) endorse renewable energy projects, grid integration, and capital investments in deepwater infrastructure.

Local Government Policy & Programmes

- **Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for the Shannon Estuary**

The SIFP provides a long-term vision for economic diversification in the Shannon Estuary, leveraging its deepwater and maritime assets. Foynes Island is identified as a '**Strategic Development Location**' recognising and reflecting its potential for deepwater port development and

port expansion. The SIFP has been adopted by all relevant coastal planning authorities along the estuary.

- **Limerick Development Plan 2022–2028**

The Limerick CDP incorporates the SIFP and supports the strategic expansion of SFPC. It includes several objectives (ECON O55–O59) promoting port development, marine industry, and the facilitation of ORE through infrastructure upgrades of Foynes Port and environmental protection. The Development Plan reflects the designation of Foynes Port as a ‘Strategic Development Location’ and recognises (under Section 5.11 Shannon Estuary - Limerick Docklands and Foynes the ongoing infrastructure upgrades within the port of Foynes including expressly, the “**new deep-water berth at Foynes Island**”. In this regard, it is useful also to refer briefly to a number of specific points of these policy objectives which acknowledge the strategic importance of existing ports, port development at Foynes, and the specificity of anticipated development at the Port of Foynes: as follows:

Objective ECON 058 Shannon Foynes Port

This objective sets out the express objective of Limerick County Council to facilitate future port development in the context of the SFPC’s Vision 2041 Masterplan as follows:

- a) “**Support the expansion of the Port at Foynes** and promote the economic and industrial development of the Shannon Estuary as a strategic transport, energy and logistics Hub, serving Limerick and the wider region **by utilising naturally occurring deep water characteristics and by identifying and safeguarding existing and future strategic transportation links, subject to fulfilling the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the conservation objectives of the Lower River Shannon SAC** site.
- b) **Promote and support Shannon Foynes Port Company’s Masterplan Vision 2041”**

And:

Objective TR O28 Docks and Ports

Which states that:

“it is an objective of the Council to support **the continued development of Shannon Foynes Port as an EU Core Network Port (TEN-T) and Limerick Docks as marine related assets**, in accordance with the 2013 National Ports Policy.”

Objective CAF O33 Development of Foynes Port

“It is an objective of the Council to support **the development of Foynes Port, as a support base for offshore wind, both during any initial exploration phase and also during the subsequent**

construction and operational and dismantling phases, subject to appropriate levels of environmental and ecological assessments”

- **Clare County Development Plan 2023–2029**

Clare CDP supports the SIFP and emphasises the Shannon Estuary’s role in energy diversification. Key policies (CDP6.10, CDP12.1, CDP12.4, CDP12.8) aim to safeguard SDLs for economic use and promote the Estuary as a future hub for offshore wind energy in Europe.

- **Kerry County Development Plan 2023–2029**

Kerry CDP aligns with the SIFP and national strategies to promote the Shannon Estuary’s marine sector and ports. Policies (KCDP9-23, 9-86, 9-87) support port infrastructure for ORE and reinforce the need for sustainable development of coastal facilities tied to wave and wind energy.

Policy Summary:

National and regional policies consistently emphasise the need for large-scale, deepwater port facilities to enable the construction, maintenance, and export of ORE technology. The Shannon Estuary’s unique geography and existing infrastructure position it as a national renewable energy hub. The development of this infrastructure is pivotal to meeting 2030 and 2050 climate policy objectives, ensuring energy security, and driving sustainable economic growth at local, regional, and national levels. Port infrastructure, and specifically at the Tier 1 port of Shannon Foynes, is identified in current national spatial and marine spatial policy as essential to Ireland’s offshore renewable energy objectives and targets and, is provided for expressly within multiple spatial development objectives provided for within the Limerick Development Plan.

EU Directives and Programmes

Various EU Directives and policies mandate member states to transition to renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These Directives underpin Ireland’s national policies on climate action, decarbonisation, energy transition, and offshore renewable energy development referenced earlier. The principal EU Directives applicable to the development are referenced below.

- **European Green Deal (2019)**

The European Green Deal is the EU’s growth strategy to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, aiming for zero net greenhouse gas emissions while decoupling economic growth from resource use. A central principle is developing an energy sector largely based on renewable resources to support a fair, prosperous, and sustainable economy.

- **Directive (EU) 2023/2413 – Promotion of Energy from Renewable Sources**

This Directive establishes a common framework to increase renewable energy use across the EU, setting a binding target for the share of energy from renewables in gross final consumption by 2030 to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. It highlights offshore renewable energy as critical to meeting

these targets, which are reflected in Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2024 and Future Framework for Offshore Renewable Energy Policy Statement 2024.

- **Renewable Energy Directive III (RED III)**

RED III (EU/2023/2413) sets a binding renewable energy target of at least 42.5% (aiming for 45%) by 2030 across all EU sectors. It promotes cooperation between member states to reach these targets. RED III informs Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy, which aims to deliver 37GW of offshore wind by 2050, enabling national climate targets and enhancing Ireland's competitiveness in the global green economy.

Summary: Consistency with EU Climate Objectives

This project aligns with EU climate action objectives under the European Green Deal and Renewable Energy Directives, supporting the transition to a climate-neutral economy by 2050. By enabling offshore renewable energy development, it contributes directly to binding EU renewable energy targets, Ireland's decarbonisation goals, and broader ambitions for a resilient, sustainable, and competitive European energy system.