Public consultation on proposed Green Growth Industrial Strategy

Submission by Chambers Ireland

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About Chambers Ireland

Chambers Ireland is an all-island business organisation with a unique geographical reach. Our members are affiliated Chambers in the cities and towns throughout the country – active in every constituency. Each of our member Chambers is central to their local business community and all seek to promote thriving local economies that can support sustainable cities and communities. Energy security, economic opportunity and climate action align in this consultation and all are key priorities for our network as part of our strategic direction. We therefore welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of a proposed Green Growth Industrial Strategy.

Key Points

- Ireland should build on the achievements of *Powering Prosperity* by embedding regulatory clarity and coordinated delivery to drive sustained investment and timely project completion.
- Offshore wind energy must remain central to the strategy, providing a strong foundation for clean energy and economic growth.
- Accelerate the rollout of mature technologies like wind, solar and battery storage, while investing in enabling infrastructure such as hydrogen production, grid upgrades and interconnection.
- Prioritise the development of green hydrogen and renewable gases to support net-zero targets and decarbonise hard-to-electrify sectors.
- Expand energy storage solutions, including batteries and hydrogen, to ensure grid stability and resilience during periods of variable renewable generation.
- Strengthen supply chains and address infrastructure bottlenecks, such as ports, grid connectivity, energy storage, pipeline repurposing and development, and offshore maritime infrastructure, to support the large-scale deployment of renewables.
- Adopt a system-value approach that integrates technologies for reliability, flexibility, affordability and emissions reduction, rather than developing solutions in silos.
- Remove barriers by streamlining planning and permitting processes and closing skills gaps through targeted education and training.
- Leverage EU and national initiatives, such as RED III and the Net Zero Industry Act, to fast-track renewable energy projects and coordinate supply-chain monitoring.
- Ensure all elements of policy, investment, planning and skills development are aligned within a cohesive national vision to convert climate ambition into durable economic growth and energy security.

Reflecting on the successes of *Powering Prosperity*

Powering Prosperity was a very welcome initiative that has been a positive force in the development of Ireland's Offshore Wind industry. While the strategy had a short-term lifespan of two years, it provided a clear and coherent framework for linking our decarbonisation and energy security ambitions with economic growth. The progress report from April 2025 showed 38 out of the 40 key actions were complete or in progress. A final implementation report would be a welcome follow-up to help guide decisions for the new green growth industrial strategy, however, this is progress we can build upon with the next iteration.

One of the biggest successes of *Powering Prosperity* was the surety it gave industry by indicating what the priority areas for development were and reaffirming a commitment to offshore wind development. This is needed at a time when green energy projects are subject to significant risks, including planning and permitting issues, grid connection delays, policy uncertainty, supply chain constraints, financing pressures, skills gaps and supporting-infrastructure deficits. The publication of the strategy and the robust monitoring helped to alleviate the risk of policy and regulatory uncertainty, as all stakeholders had a clear roadmap and signal of intent from government for the years ahead. In this way, it also strengthened supply-chains by allocating funding and stimulating demand signals to reinforce the market. The strategy provided industry with clear and coherent direction, which has been an important driver in de-risking green energy projects. The reduction in risk is also an important catalyst for capital investment.

The strategy also successfully fostered strong connections and collaboration across government departments, regulatory bodies, state agencies and grid operators. It recognised that success cannot be achieved in silos. By co-ordinating entities including the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, SEAI, EirGrid and An Bord Pleanála, the strategy created clearer decision-making pathways and more predictable regulatory processes. This collaborative architecture strengthened investor confidence, accelerated project delivery and helped ensure that

offshore wind deployment is integrated with grid development, spatial planning and climate policy objectives. From a developer-led side, the fostering of collaborative clusters was a successful intervention that could be developed further and applied successfully to other green technologies.

It would be positive to see the actions contained within *Powering Prosperity* being developed and incorporated into a new iteration of Ireland's green growth industrial strategy that is seeking to incorporate all the different stakeholders in our domestic energy mix. The momentum that was created should now be built upon and the lessons learned from that strategy should inform the next phase of policy development, including embedding regulatory clarity, coordinating delivery and stakeholder engagement as standard practice to translate ambition into sustained investment, timely project delivery and long-term energy security. Developing a whole-of-energy system will require this coordinated action and planning if we are to realise Ireland's national decarbonisation and competitiveness goals.

Priority technologies to drive Ireland's green growth

It is positive to see engagement on the topic of potential green technologies that can be deployed in Ireland over the coming years and we appreciate the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment's commitment to examining the opportunities to not only develop a strong domestic energy supply but to also identify prospects that can further our economic development. The transition to a low-carbon economy is both an environmental imperative and a security of supply opportunity. While it is commendable to ensure Ireland is keeping pace with the latest technological advancements, and we do not want to risk falling behind in light of emerging global developments, the focus of a new and updated green industrial strategy should be on accelerating delivery. This means rapidly scaling proven, cost-effective technologies while ensuring that deployment is supported by stable regulatory frameworks and streamlined planning processes.

While the successor to *Powering Prosperity* is proposing to diversify from a singular focus on wind energy, Chambers Ireland would like to ensure that both offshore and onshore wind remain key priorities of a new industrial strategy. Security of supply and climate targets should remain the driving forces for Ireland's green energy transition and our potential wind energy output, particularly offshore wind, offers a foundation upon which complementary industries can be built. Retreating from or diluting this focus would risk undermining investor confidence and forfeiting any early-mover advantages in offshore and floating wind. Instead, a renewed industrial strategy should consolidate wind's role as the backbone of Ireland's clean energy system, while leveraging it to catalyse broader innovation, export growth, and regional economic development.

At the same time, a credible green industrial strategy must look beyond wind alone. Realising Ireland's decarbonisation and energy security ambitions will require parallel investment in enabling infrastructure. This includes medium and long-duration energy storage, essential grid upgrades, hydrogen production and storage, demand-side response and interconnection. Developing these complementary technologies will not only address system reliability and resilience, but also create opportunities for domestic industrial development, innovation and export growth.

Chambers Ireland have been advocating for a number of years that Ireland should treat green hydrogen and its derivatives as a strategic pillar of the energy transition, leveraging surplus offshore wind to produce export-capable fuels and to decarbonise hard-to-electrify sectors. Although we are not currently in a position where surplus offshore wind is an opportunity and servicing domestic demand is still the priority, investing in the necessary infrastructure to make green hydrogen a possibility in future should be prioritised. The rollout of the National Hydrogen Strategy represented a roadmap to developing an indigenous renewable hydrogen sector and these commitments should be reflected in this new Green Growth Industrial Strategy. A recent report published by Arup and commissioned by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment found that "Ireland's hydrogen production potential significantly exceeds projected domestic demand, positioning the country as a future

net exporter of renewable hydrogen and its derivatives." The report explores technical and commercial pathways for export, including repurposing existing pipelines, while also identifying infrastructure, regulatory and investment considerations that would need to be addressed to realise export opportunities. While wind and solar power generated more than 40 percent of our electricity in 2024, oil and gas still accounted for over 80 percent of total Irish energy consumption. Renewable gases including green hydrogen offer opportunities to replace natural gas and deliver a net-zero carbon gas network. This will be particularly pertinent for hard to decarbonise sectors that are not suited to electrification, including heavy industry, heating and transport. It could also be key in supporting the decarbonisation of the aviation industry by contributing to the creation of sustainable aviation fuels.

If Ireland wants to foster economic opportunities from the green energy transition, then investing in efficient short, medium and long-term storage solutions will be crucial. Short and medium-term battery storage, such as sodium-ion and lithium-ion technologies, can respond rapidly to grid fluctuations and smooth intermittent renewable generation, which can help ensure system stability. Long-term storage, including green hydrogen and flow batteries, is critical for bridging more significant gaps in renewable output during sustained periods of low wind or cloud cover. There are a number of additional options that can be explored as part of these storage solutions, including battery parks co-located with wind farms and hydrogen production facilities integrated with offshore wind. Embedding energy storage solutions within Ireland's industrial and energy policy frameworks not only strengthens grid resilience but also positions the country as a hub for innovative low-carbon technologies.

Solar generation capacity has surged in Ireland over recent years with over 1.7GW now connected to the electricity network. Although it has been established for some years when compared to other energy advancements, the flexibility of solar PV technology, its modular and scalable nature, its cost competitiveness over recent years and its ability to help balance the variability of wind are important reasons to continue investing in and developing this sector.

Additional supports to drive the development of renewable technologies

All of the above technologies require intensive supports and significant investment. Without robust enabling frameworks in place, we risk eroding investor confidence, halting progress and losing ground to global competitors. Energy infrastructure needs to be treated as a critical national priority, therefore, without a resilient supply chain, broad RD&I and industry deployment opportunities, the potential of our green energy sector will fail to be realised. We cannot afford to be selective when energy security and decarbonising our energy systems are critical national imperatives.

The robustness of Ireland's supply-chains that serve our green energy infrastructure projects needs to be prioritised as a matter of urgency. As we refer to wind energy above as a strategic pillar in our energy transition, we need to ensure that as deployment accelerates, potential structural bottlenecks are being managed appropriately. Global competition for specific components is intensifying and resulting in longer lead-times and rising price volatility. There is currently inadequate enabling infrastructure across port developments, grid upgrades, security and cybersecurity frameworks and specialist offshore installation vessels. Without proactive and coordinated investment across these enabling elements, offshore wind ambitions risk being constrained not by resource potential, but by supply chain readiness.

Similar issues exist across the other green technologies.

In battery storage, we included the need to investigate sodium-ion batteries, as well as the more prolific lithium-ion batteries and this is because of the abundance of sodium as a key raw material when compared with the scarcity of lithium as a mineral resource. Similarly, flow batteries can offer longer storage durations and cycle lives, as well as lower degradation compared with Li-ion batteries. However, both alternatives currently do not offer cost competitiveness compared with lithium but this balance may shift over time and we should be ready to realise any potential opportunities.

In the recent report by Arup into the export potential of green hydrogen, it was recommended that repurposing existing pipelines would be the most cost-effective option for transporting to Europe. Investigating these opportunities and what may be required to retrofit such infrastructure or, if needed, develop new pipelines or shipping options will be a key driver of growth and development in this sector.

In terms of research, development and innovation, we should take a technology neutral approach that focuses on system value and integration. The green growth industrial strategy should recognise that in a complex, interconnected energy system the greatest economic and decarbonisation gains arise from how technologies work together rather than from any single breakthrough. A system-value approach instead assesses how investments contribute to overall reliability, flexibility, affordability, security of supply and emissions reduction. This should ensure that renewable generation is developed alongside grid capacity, storage, demand response and interconnection, instead of developed in independent silos.

Barriers to scaling renewable energy and green technologies in Ireland

Planning and permitting are some of the biggest obstacles facing the growth of the renewable energy and green technology sectors in Ireland. Although reform of the system has been prioritised in recent years, planning approvals are still too slow. The risk of judicial review and the lengthy waiting times for approvals give rise to great uncertainty and risk for developers. If the state cannot negate these obstacles when it comes to infrastructure of strategic national importance, then developers of new green technologies are even more at risk. Additionally, the institutional capacity within government departments, planning bodies and regulatory agencies needs to be strengthened and there should be greater alignment across all decision-making bodies to avoid fragmentation and inconsistent decisions. The establishment of MARA as Ireland's maritime regulator has represented an important step towards greater

cohesion, however, it is yet to result in the real-world acceleration of renewable energy projects.

The traditional prioritisation of mature technologies across Ireland's regulatory framework is another barrier to scaling new and emerging renewable energy and green technologies in Ireland. While the proposed focus on innovation in this new green growth strategy is commendable, the reality is that the system naturally benefits technologies with established risk profiles, stable business models and predictable deployment pathways. Anything the disrupts the status quo or requires broader regulatory overhauls, for example in planning, licensing or grid connections, will increase project risk and potential costs, and can leave projects susceptible to failure.

Finally, skills gaps continue to be one of the biggest constraints facing businesses of all sizes and across all sectors in Ireland, and the renewable energy sector is perhaps even more vulnerable to the consequences of this. When we talk about new and cutting-edge technologies, we significantly reduce the potential talent-pool with the necessary skills and experience to design, execute and oversee these new energy projects safely and competently. Recruitment will therefore become a significant constraint unless national skills strategies can effectively adapt in line with market developments to ensure our further and higher education systems are responding with the programmes and course material that is needed for this next generation of our energy system.

EU-derived interventions to expedite development

In recent years, a number of EU interventions and forthcoming national initiatives have the potential to expedite development. This creates opportunities to fast-track or streamline certain issues. At an EU level, Renewable Energy Directive (RED) III introduces specific planning and permitting reforms aimed at speeding up renewable energy installations such as solar, wind and storage. It directs Members States to

designate renewable acceleration areas, it mandates the simplification of permitting processes and it proposes that grid connection planning and storage installations must be aligned with renewables permitting. Similarly, the Net Zero Industry Act sets strict maximum timelines for environmental and construction permits for strategic net-zero projects. It also embeds monitoring and coordination mechanisms to track progress on manufacturing capacity to help identify supply-chain bottlenecks that will support coordination across the EU that can benefit Ireland. At a national level, Ireland should be utilising these measures to fast-track energy projects of strategic national importance.

Final considerations

Ireland's next phase of a green industrial strategy that aims to capitalise on the economic opportunities of the green energy transition must move beyond the ambition that was initiated in *Powering Prosperity* and set out a clear delivery framework for deploying net zero technologies. Green growth will only be realised if underpinned by a cohesive national vision that aligns energy policy, industrial strategy, infrastructure investment, spatial planning and skills development within a single, coordinated framework. Domestically, Ireland must focus on realistic and targeted policies to combine the extensive rollout of mature renewable technologies including wind and solar with focused support for emerging technologies that can diversify our energy mix and strengthen competitiveness. By embedding coordination and delivery at its core, the Green Growth Industrial Strategy can convert climate ambition into durable economic growth, regional development and enhanced energy security.