Chambers Ireland
Advancing business together

Submission to An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) regarding Oriel Wind Farm

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About Chambers Ireland

Chambers Ireland is an all-island business organisation with a unique geographical reach. Our members are the Chambers of Commerce 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.

Key Observations

Chambers Ireland supports the strategic development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy resources. We recognise that this is among the most important infrastructure investments the country can make – conducive to furthering the State's energy security, economic competitiveness and attaining its climate goals - and that it must be delivered through robust planning processes, community engagement and a credible commitment to local economic benefit.

On that basis, and for the reasons set out in this submission, we support the Oriel Offshore Wind Farm planning application and urge An Coimisiún Pleanála to grant permission.

Importance of the Oriel Wind Farm

Contribution to national and EU climate and energy targets

Under the Climate Action Plan, Ireland has committed to sourcing 80% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and to deploying at least 5 GW of offshore wind in Irish waters by the same date. Under the EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED III), Ireland must achieve a 43% renewable share in gross final energy consumption by 2030.

Both targets are currently off track. In particular, renewable energy supplied only 14.6% of the State's total energy requirements in 2024.[1] Ireland is projected to achieve somewhere between 23% and 29% in greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2030 against a legally binding target of 51%.[2] The financial exposure this creates is significant: the State could face payments of between

[1] https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/key-publications/national-energy-balance#:~:text=Renewable%20energy%20supplied%2014.6%25%20of%20Ireland%27s%20energy%20requirements%2C,from%20solar-PV%20was%20up%20by%2069%25%20in%202024.

[2] https://www.epa.ie/news-releases/news-releases-2025/epa-projections-show-ireland-off-track-for-2030-climate-targets.php

€8 billion and €26 billion to EU partner states in carbon credits if it remains on its current trajectory.[3]

Oriel is one of five east coast offshore wind projects currently in the planning system which, together, represent approximately 4.7 GW of potential capacity. Not one has yet received a planning decision. This is compounded by the fact that State is already projected to fall 4 GW short of its 2030 offshore wind target. [4] Oriel has Maritime Area Consent, has completed the full suite of environmental studies, and has been in active development for nearly two decades. It is, in the most practical sense, ready. Granting permission would be conducive to moving the State meaningfully closer to its offshore wind target and reduce its exposure to external shocks.

Oriel would also be one of the State's first commercial-scale offshore wind and mark the beginning of a pipeline that Ireland must develop at pace over the coming decade. Approval would set the template and help build the supply chain that gives investors' confidence the regulatory certainty they require to invest in core State infrastructure.

Energy security

Ireland's energy security position is, by any measure, one of the weakest in the EU. Our energy import dependency stood at 79.6% in 2024 which is nearly 22% above the EU average of 58.3%.[4] The State also imports 100% of its oil and fossil fuels account for over 81% of total energy supply.[5] The only remaining indigenous gas field in Ireland – Corrib - is in decline and has a limited remaining lifespan.

The economic consequences are direct. Irish business electricity prices averaged 24.27 cent per kWh in the first half of 2025, against an EU average of 18.37 cent/kWh.[6] Ireland's pre-tax

[3] https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/ireland-facing-eu-fines-of-up-to-e26-billion-if-climate-targets-missed/

[4] https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/key-publications/national-energy-balance

[5] https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/key-publications/national-energy-balance

[6] https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/prices

electricity prices were the highest in the European Union in 2024, at approximately 73% above the EU average. This reflects a pricing anomaly that is also a structural consequence of dependence on imported fossil fuels for electricity generation.

Offshore wind addresses this at source. Once built, it has near-zero marginal generation cost and it is not subject to commodity price movements, geopolitical shocks or supply disruptions from abroad. Every megawatt-hour that a windfarm at the scale of the proposed Oriel project generates is a megawatt-hour of imported fossil fuel that Ireland does not need. Over the 25-plus year lifetime of the project; that represents a substantial and permanent improvement on the State's energy security and cost position.

Beyond individual cost savings, the project is central to improving the resilience of the overall system. Diversifying the generation mix and ensuring the capability for battery storage reduce the single-point vulnerability that the grid currently carries to both fuel price movements and physical supply disruptions and build the foundation for a more stable and self-sufficient energy system.

Economic, Business and Regional Development Impact

Employment and skills

The employment potential of our offshore wind sector is well evidenced; both Chambers Ireland and its affiliated Chambers have consistently highlighted this point.[7] This is reflected in Government analysis under the 'Powering Prosperity' Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy projects up to 146,000 full-time equivalent years of employment and in-country Gross Value Added of

[7] https://www.chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Chambers-Ireland-ORESS-1-submission.pdf pg.10

https://chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Chambers-Ireland-ORESS-1-submission.pdf pg.4

https://chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Offshore-Wind-Phase-2-Consultation.pdf pg.3

up to €2.4 billion per year by 2049.[8] These statistics are grounded in the experience of countries that invested earlier in the sector and are now seeing the returns.

Construction of a project of Oriel's proposed scale creates direct employment in civil and marine engineering, cable installation, turbine assembly logistics, health and safety, and onshore groundworks. Once operational, the project has the potential to generate long-term, skilled employment in operations and maintenance serviced from local ports and drawing on local trades and technical expertise.

The skills required for offshore wind (including electrical and mechanical engineering, marine operations, rope access, health and safety management) are transferable across the sector, and in growing demand across Europe. This is significant given the State has the educational infrastructure to develop these skills.[9] What the training pipeline needs is live domestic projects. Apprenticeship programmes, graduate placements and vocational training in offshore wind require an actual project base which is at the scale of projects like Oriel.

Accordingly, Oriel will play a role in offering the kind of long-term, high-quality employment that communities in the north-east region have historically had limited access to. This could be facilitated via alignment between the developer, training providers, further education colleges and by the State bodies responsible for skills policy.

Supply chain and SME opportunities

Ireland currently captures approximately 22% of the total value generated by offshore wind development domestically.[10] The remaining 78% (encompassing the manufacturing, specialist marine services, logistics and professional services that could, with a developed supply chain, be

[8] https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/powering-prosperity.pdf

[9] https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-enterprise-tourism-and-employment/publications/powering-prosperity-irelands-offshore-wind-industrial-strategy

[10] https://www.academia.edu/94823627/Economic_and_employment_impacts_of_offshore_wind_for_Ireland_A_value_chain_analysis

provided by local businesses) currently goes to supply chains built up in countries that moved earlier. That share can and should improve, but only if Irish projects are approved and delivered.

Consequently, the breadth of opportunity for businesses across the supply chain is significant:

- Engineering and technical services: marine surveying, geotechnical investigation, electrical design, commissioning and inspection.
- Marine services: vessel chartering, crew transfer operations, harbour logistics and marine safety.
- Onshore logistics and civil works: transport, groundworks, access road construction and cable route management.
- Professional services: legal, environmental consultancy, financial advisory and project management.
- Support services: accommodation, catering, facilities management and local trades during the construction phase.

Early and transparent communication of procurement timelines is critical to unlocking this potential. Irish SMEs require lead time to develop capability, prepare bids and, where necessary, form consortia. Chambers Ireland would welcome a formal commitment from the developer to engage with local and regional business networks well in advance of procurement processes opening, with clear advance notice of contract packages, values and timelines. This is not an unreasonable ask — it is standard practice in more mature offshore wind markets and should be the baseline expectation here.

Regional and economic benefits

Local communities stand to benefit directly and substantially from the proposed project. The project is located off the Louth coast, its landfall and onshore infrastructure will run through the region, and its operational base will require sustained servicing from local ports and service providers over the lifetime of the wind farm.

Greenore Port in Co. Louth has already committed €30 million in capital investment in anticipation of offshore wind activity, including purpose-built operational facilities and crew transfer vessel infrastructure.[11] That is private capital staked on the expectation that offshore wind projects will be approved and developed. Planning approval for the project directly validates that investment and creates the conditions for further similar commitments from ports, logistics businesses and service providers across the region.

The economic footprint of the construction and operational phases will extend well beyond the port itself. Ports will experience sustained demand over the operational lifetime for vessel berthing, crew logistics, parts storage and maintenance facilities. The local economy will also experience significant demand during construction, as specialist workers are based in the region for extended periods, followed by ongoing demand from operations and maintenance personnel.

Community benefit funds can also be structured to operate for the full lifetime of the wind farm and directed at coastal communities in the vicinity. This is a substantial and long-term commitment to shared benefit.

Onshore Infrastructure Considerations

The landfall point, underground cabling routes running inland, substations, access roads and associated civil works are all material components of the project. Managing these components is extremely manageable and it is critical that this is done effectively.

Experience in other infrastructure projects in Ireland and across Europe shows clearly that early engagement reduces conflict and builds workable solutions for all stakeholders. Landowners and businesses that feel informed and genuinely consulted are significantly more likely to accommodate the disruption that major infrastructure inevitably involves. Coordination with local authorities and other relevant stakeholders should remain substantive and should continue

[11] https://afloat.ie/marine-environment/marine-planning/item/67147-greenore-port-in-co-louth-to-proceed-with-ore-base-following-appeal-withdrawal

well before construction, ensuring that planning and delivery are well aligned and that issues are identified and resolved at an early stage.

Planning, Consenting and Infrastructure

The importance of predictable, timely decisions

Predictable and timely decisions are critical to ensuring regulatory certainty of the project and have a direct impact on the attractiveness of the State for similar projects of importance to the State.

Unnecessary delay in the planning system defers construction starts, pushes back operational dates, reduces confidence and increases costs. At the national level, it compounds the State's exposure to external geopolitical shocks – of note being the volatility arising from the current war in Iran – and constitutes a hypothetical handbrake on the State achieving its climate goals.

Planning delays also have a compounding effect across the broader delivery chain: grid connection timelines, port readiness and supply chain development all depend on planning certainty, and delay in one element creates knock-on pressure in all the others.

We therefore submit that predictable, timely decision-making in the planning system is a material requirement for energy security and the economic future of the State. All stakeholders, including investors, developers and businesses along the value chain, make long-term capital commitments based on the expectation that the system will function as it should. Where it does not, the cost is real and measurable, even if it is not always visible.

Alignment between planning, grid, ports and marine planning

The planning system is one part of a broader delivery infrastructure, and it can only deliver results if the other parts are moving in step. Grid connection, port infrastructure and marine licensing must advance in parallel with planning, not sequentially after it.