



Accelerating the delivery of offshore wind energy in Ireland's maritime area

Policy Brief

December 2025

Highlights

- Our research explored the development of OWE in the Irish Celtic Sea
- Despite governance progress, five challenges were identified through multiple stakeholder engagement processes. These relate to: i) mismatch between OWE ambition and project delivery; ii) insufficient strategic planning and funding for Irish ports; iii) limited stakeholder inclusion in planning and decision-making; iv) absence of a maritime security strategy for critical maritime infrastructure; and v) inadequate access to robust marine data for informed decision-making.
- Recommendations are provided which focus on: a) the development of a detailed implementation plan for the National DMAP for Offshore Renewable Energy; b) a national ports policy that is fit for purpose; c) multi-sector involvement in MSP advisory and implementation structures; d) developing a critical maritime infrastructure policy; and e) establishing a 'Centre for Marine Data' to provide marine data and information.
- This policy brief is a result of research conducted by the PERMAGOV project which sets out to improve EU marine governance so that it can better meet the goals and objectives established in the European Green Deal.

Policy objectives

Offshore wind energy (OWE) development has a significant role to play in tackling climate change and enabling the energy transition from fossil fuels. One of the core objectives of the European Green Deal (EGD) is to develop the full potential of Europe's offshore wind energy. In response to this ambition, growth prospects for European OWE include installed offshore wind capacity of 500 GW by 2030. Ireland has ambitious targets to install 5 GW of OWE capacity by 2030, 2GW under development by 2030, 20GW by 2040 and 37 GW by 2050. These targets form a key part of the national objective to generate 80% of electricity from renewable sources by 2030.

Governance response

To enable these targets to be met, marine governance in Ireland is undergoing significant change, involving institutional re-structuring and policy innovation. Of relevance, is the Government's move away from a project-led to a plan-led approach for the development of OWE in Irish maritime areas. These changes have been expedited by the enactment of marine spatial planning (MSP) legislation, i.e. the MAP Act in 2021. In particular, the introduction of designated maritime area plans (DMAPs) represents the first examples of spatially focused marine planning in Ireland.

However, despite these governance improvements, barriers still persist, which are hampering the acceleration of OWE policy development, including specific policy for floating offshore wind energy (FLOW) technology development in the Irish Celtic Sea. Governance challenges include: a mismatch between OWE ambition and delivery of associated projects; insufficient strategic planning and funding for Irish ports; limited stakeholder inclusion in planning and decision-making; absence of a maritime security strategy for critical maritime infrastructure; and inadequate access to robust marine data for informed decision-making. As a result, Ireland despite having an abundance of offshore wind resources has not built an offshore wind farm in 20 years.

Failure to address these challenges poses significant risks. Short-term OWE targets are likely to be missed, jeopardising medium-term goals as well. Consequences include diminished investor confidence, increased reliance on imported energy, and potential payments of between €8–26 billion to Europe for non-compliance with agreed EU climate targets. Immediate action to address these barriers is essential to safeguard Ireland's energy security, affordability, and climate commitments. Through multiple stakeholder engagement processes, several governance challenges have been prioritised.

This policy brief outlines recommended improvement pathways, identifies key actors, and specifies the capabilities required to implement the proposed governance measures.

Recommendations

National DMAP implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance challenge: There is a mismatch between ambitious OWE targets and delivery of projects. The pace of change needs to accelerate to achieve national OWE objectives. • Pathway for improvements: A detailed implementation plan for the National Designated Maritime Area Plan for Offshore Renewable Energy (DMAP) must be published including a roadmap for auctions, consents, community benefit funds, deployment and development of supporting infrastructure i.e. grid and ports and supply chain. Also needed is supplementary statutory guidance for OWE development including data requirements, standard metrics for impact assessments, multi-criteria analysis, socio-economic impact assessments should also be published. • Key actors: DCEE, supported by DETE, DoT, DAFM, DoD as well as OWE industry, Eirgrid, MARA, SEAI, CRU, ACP, OPR, Marine Institute, eNGOs, fisheries and coastal community representatives. • Capacity: Need for additional staff, expertise in ecology, planning and engineering and funding for data collection i.e. offshore surveys.
Irish ports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance challenge: A change in the strategic planning and funding of Irish ports is necessary to address the evolving nature of port business i.e. several Irish ports should provide supporting infrastructure for OWE projects being developed off their coast. • Pathway for improvement: A national ports policy that is fit for purpose. It should identify ports with the potential to support the OWE sector (fixed and FLOW) using specific criteria and prescribing a funding structure for long-term port development. • Key actors: DoT, supported by DCEE, Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation, Department of Finance, DAFM, DHLGH, Irish ports, ORE industry, Eirgrid, MARA, ACP. • Capacity: Need for additional funding, skills in policy development and resources for decision-making.



Stakeholder involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance challenge: The inclusion of a diverse range of actors in plan-and decision-making processes is necessary to avoid exclusion of different knowledge and expertise, and a lack of confidence in these practices. • Pathway for improvement: Multi-sector involvement is required in MSP advisory and implementation structures. • Key actors: Revised role for the MSP Advisory Group. This would include expanding their membership and remit to ensure MSP is evidence based and up-to-date data is used in plan- and decision-making. The Advisory Group should link with coastal communities and explore the potential of networking with the Community Liaison Office (CLO) within local coastal authorities.
Maritime security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance challenge: The lack of a maritime security strategy puts critical maritime infrastructure, including energy-related installations on- and offshore and associated staff, at risk of damage from accidents and deliberate/ malicious attacks at sea. • Pathway for improvement: Develop and publish a critical maritime infrastructure policy. • Key actors: Department of Defence, supported by maritime industries and related agencies. • Capacity: Resources required for implementation of forthcoming strategy.
Data accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance challenge: Accessible and robust marine data and information for decision-making is lacking. • Pathway for improvement: The provision of a 'Centre for Marine Data' to assist in marine spatial planning, identifying sites for development potential and areas of constraint, socio-economic and environmental assessments, monitoring and reporting including Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive indicators should be supported. • Key actors: Could be hosted within the Marine Institute and supported by all government departments with a maritime responsibility/ interest, MARA, ACP. • Capacity: Need to build up state capabilities in terms of data science expertise. The new centre needs to be given a specific mandate i.e. to review and monitor marine environment (status, indicators, impact assessments etc.). This mandate can include authority to allocate resources/ equipment/ training to fishers with assigned science support roles. Adequate funding will be required to establish this centre.

Actor Acronyms: DCEE: Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment; DOT: Department of Transport; MARA: Maritime Area Regulatory Authority; SEAI: Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland; CRU: Commission for Regulation of Utilities; ACP: An Coimisiún Pleanála; MI: Marine Institute; DHLGH: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, OPR: Office of the Planning Regulator.

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