

Advancing the Offshore Wind Opportunity: Bridging Irish and Scottish Perspectives

Summary Report

June 2024



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Overview

Advancing the Offshore Wind Opportunity: Bridging Irish and Scottish Perspectives had the overarching objective to explore opportunities for collaboration between Ireland and Scotland with the aim to maximise the economic benefit of offshore wind energy to both countries. Establishing an annual joint event with Scotland on offshore renewable energy was an action from the recently published [Powering Prosperity – Ireland’s Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy](#).

The event took place on 12 and 13 June 2024, and included a series of policy roundtables in Dublin on 12 June, and an Industry Showcase in Cork on 13 June.

On the first day of the event, the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Peter Burke TD, and Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation, Dara Calleary TD, along with the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan TD, were joined by Scotland’s Minister for Climate Action, Gillian Martin MSP, for a series of policy roundtable discussions with industry and the research and academic community focusing on three themes:

- Offshore wind supply chains
- RDI & skills
- Regulation, planning and infrastructure



Scotland’s Minister Gillian Martin and Minister Dara Calleary share a lighthearted moment during the RDI & Skills Roundtable Discussion in Dublin on 12 June

The following day, Ministers Peter Burke TD and Gillian Martin MSP, joined by Councillor Damian Boylan, opened the Industry Showcase in Cork where the three themes of the previous day were continued across a number of company presentations and policy updates from relevant Departments and statutory bodies. The event also provided networking opportunities for companies and RPOs from Ireland and Scotland.



Minister Peter Burke delivering the opening address at the Industry Showcase in Cork on 13 June

In parallel to the Showcase, the visiting Scottish Government delegation took part in a tour of Cork Harbour incorporating visits to the Port of Cork (Ringaskiddy terminal), the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI), the MaREI research institute, and the ESB power station at Aghada. Ministers Burke and Martin both joined the Port of Cork visit, which included an overview of the Port's future plans relating to offshore renewable energy from the vantage point of one of their new CCT Cranes. Minister Martin also joined the tour of NMCI, which included a demonstration of some of the College's marine environment simulators. The tour of MaREI included the Lir National Ocean Test Facility, while at the ESB power station, the ESB's future plans for offshore wind energy at Aghada were presented to the delegation, along with a tour of one of the battery sites adjacent to the power station.

Over 160 people participated across the two days of the event resulting in rich discussions on a number of topics crossing over the three themes of the event.



Minister Peter Burke and Minister Gillian Martin take in an aerial view of the Port of Cork from the vantage point of one of the Port's cranes during the tour of Cork Harbour on 13 June

Emerging Themes

An overarching theme across all of the discussions was the need to collaborate rather than compete, address common challenges with shared solutions, and for the recent good engagement between Government and industry to continue, while further developing the connection between industry and academia. Offshore Renewable Energy represents a significant economic development opportunity for both countries, as well as providing a basis for achieving more balanced regional economic development arising from new high-skilled, well-paid jobs in the sector. The importance of working with communities to develop support for Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) projects was highlighted, particularly through the effective communication of the socio-economic benefits of ORE.

A strong sentiment permeating through the discussions was that Ireland and Scotland working together can create a bigger critical mass to address some of the challenges being faced across the ORE sector, including supply chain constraints and the opportunity for both countries to work together to broaden the capacity and capability in the ORE supply chain, RDI challenges and joint opportunities, and collaboratively addressing the skills requirements across the sector.

The following is a selection of some of the recurring themes across the various discussions held throughout this event.

Offshore wind supply chains

- Constraints in the global supply chain represent a major challenge and collaboration between countries like Ireland and Scotland can more effectively plug some of the gaps rather than each country working unilaterally to achieve the same outcome.
- There is opportunity for the supply chains in Ireland and Scotland to work in both countries and enhance their respective capacities.
- The ‘3 Cs’ - certainty, consistency, and continuity - of policy and planning are needed to drive the pipeline of projects that will unlock the investment needed in the ORE supply chain. In particular, the need for iterative auctions in Ireland will be important.
- Opportunities exist to pivot already established sectors, such as technology, financial services, and legal services into ORE, and these need to be pursued.
- SMEs in the local supply chain often struggle to compete for large contracts and there is a need to ensure that smaller companies have the opportunity to bid on a competitive basis in tenders.
- Ireland should build the supply chain around what we are good at – similar to the ‘make, nurture, buy, protect’ model from the UK’s Offshore Wind Industrial Growth plan, for example by combining Digital/AI to traditional ORE supply chain.

RDI & skills

- Collaboration across ORE RDI and skills requirements between Ireland and Scotland offers an opportunity to develop complementary actions which can have a greater impact in a shorter timeframe, especially in terms of an Offshore Wind Centre of Excellence and future workforce requirements across the ORE and aligned sectors.
- Centres of Excellence are a good model for addressing RDI challenges, but they must offer something new, be complementary to other similar centres, and avoid duplication.
- There is need to de-risk floating offshore wind (FLOW). Ireland needs to be a fast follower when it comes to FLOW and should look to Scotland for key learnings in this space.
- There is need for an evidenced based narrative to inform both policy and investment decisions.
- Smart investments in RDI can assist in reducing supply chain costs.
- Research is needed that examines processes and systems for the whole lifecycle of ORE, and not just up to deployment stage.
- Innovation can come from both academia and the commercial sector.
- There is possibility for innovation around offtake solutions and end uses for ORE.
- People and skills are the key resources that will drive the ORE sector. A range of skills are needed, including new skills, re-skilling, and harnessing transferrable skills.
- Vocational models and skills passporting need to be addressed for the ORE sector.
- There is a need to establish the broader framework conditions needed to attract skilled workers from abroad, for example the availability of affordable housing.

- Creating an awareness of offshore wind from primary school level upwards is required to market the ORE sector as an attractive career.



Minister Eamon Ryan and Minister Gillian Martin share an exchange during the Regulation, Planning and Infrastructure Roundtable Discussion in Dublin on 12 June

Regulation, Planning, and Infrastructure

- Ireland is currently finalising its Planning and Development Bill and there is an opportunity to learn from Scotland's National Planning Framework as part of this.
- There is potential for ports in Ireland and Scotland to learn from each other as they prepare for ORE, and for both countries to share learnings on funding models for ports as both jurisdictions share a tapestry of port ownership models which makes the funding question a complex one in both countries.
- Infrastructural challenges such as the availability of ports and grid to support ORE deployment and dispatch need to be quickly addressed – otherwise the opportunity may not be fully captured.
- Regulation can be an enabler of development, once effective systems are in place.
- The plan-led approach to developing ORE in Ireland is welcome as it offers certainty. Continuity and consistency of policy is crucial and in that regard the acceleration of DMAPs and more seabed for MARA would be very welcome.
- There is a need to examine non-price criteria for auctions.
- The adequate resourcing of statutory bodies is vital for a well-functioning regulatory system.
- Pre-planning engagement between developers and statutory bodies is an effective way to de-risk planning for individual projects.
- An important objective of maritime area regulation is to ensure positive outcomes for all who work in our marine areas, and to ensure that the benefits of the seabed come to the State and its citizens.

- A joint, or federated approach to data collection, analysis, and sharing is needed to ensure usable and consistent data is available, in a timely manner.
- Social license for ORE developments – both offshore and onshore – is vital to building a successful sector and community engagement is critical to achieving this.
- The creation of new green jobs is a huge benefit of developing an ORE sector of scale and this in turn will present significant socio-economic benefits for communities. However, projects need to be successfully deployed to ensure that these new jobs materialise.

This event marked the first significant engagement between the Irish and Scottish governments in identifying a joint programme of work that can be delivered with industry to address the key challenges and further explore joint opportunities.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment would like to sincerely thank all of those who contributed to this event, including counterparts in the Scottish Government, industry, the research and academic community, Government Departments and Agencies, and in particular, the Port of Cork Company, NMCI, MaREI, and ESB for hosting the delegation on the Cork Harbour tour.

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