



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Public Participation Statement South Coast DMAP

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Prepared by the Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications
[gov.ie/decc](https://www.gov.ie/decc)

Foreword by the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications



In Ireland, and throughout Europe, we are increasingly aware of the crucial role for offshore renewables in our transition to a sustainable and secure energy future. The urgency of action in breaking our fossil fuel reliance has been amplified by the escalating global climate emergency and illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine.

By delivering sufficient offshore wind to power more than 2.5 million Irish homes, Ireland's first offshore wind auction – ORESS 1 – will come to be seen as a pivotal moment in our clean energy transition. It is the clearest signal yet that

offshore renewables will deliver an affordable, clean, and secure indigenous alternative to imported fossil fuels.

To accelerate our green energy transition, the Oireachtas has approved that all future offshore renewable energy developments in Ireland will take place according to a strategic plan-led approach. What this means in practice is that the State, in cooperation with local communities and other key stakeholders, will determine the appropriate location for offshore renewable energy projects, consistent with the protection of marine environment and biodiversity. This will take place through the establishment of Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs), the first of which will be located off the South Coast of Ireland.

It is my view that the establishment of a South Coast DMAP for offshore renewables will have a transformational impact on regional coastal communities, through sustainable jobs creation, inward investment and Mandatory Community Benefit Funds.

I strongly encourage all interested citizens, local communities, and groups involved in existing maritime activities, including fishing and seafood production, throughout the South Coast to engage in the public participation opportunities that will contribute to the establishment of the South Coast DMAP over the coming months.

Eamon Ryan T.D., Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications

1 Background

The National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) was adopted by Government in May 2021 as Ireland's first statutory maritime spatial plan. This framework applies to a maritime area of approximately 495,000 square kilometres and brings together all marine-based human activities for the first time, outlining the Government's vision, objectives and marine planning policies for each marine activity.

A key objective of the NMPF is to ensure that future developments in Ireland's maritime area take place in a sustainable and strategic way, with consideration for environmental protection and with comprehensive opportunities for public engagement, most importantly including the engagement of local communities. This approach will ensure that all future developments in Ireland's increasingly congested maritime area are appropriately located, and take place with consideration for existing maritime activities, in addition to prioritising environmental protection. Where possible, this approach will further enable the co-existence of different maritime usages and activities.

To safeguard these objectives, the NMPF commits Government to the use of sub-national forward spatial planning through the establishment of Designated Maritime Area Plans or DMAPs. DMAPs can be used to develop multi-activity area plans; to promote use of specific activities, including for example offshore renewable energy; and/or for the purposes of the sustainable use and protection of particular marine environments. Crucially, the process to establish DMAPs will include comprehensive opportunities for interested citizen and stakeholder engagement, most importantly in relation to local coastal and marine communities.

The Maritime Area Planning Act, 2021, requires that all DMAPs must be prepared by a designated Competent Authority, who has been approved for this purpose by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (the Minister for Housing). In this instance, the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications (the Minister) has been designated as the Competent Authority to prepare DMAPs for the development of offshore renewable energy. This follows the approval by Government and the Oireachtas that all future offshore renewable energy developments in Ireland will take place within maritime areas that have been specifically designated for that purpose.

What this means in practice is that from now onwards, the State and not individual developers will determine the appropriate location for all future offshore renewable energy projects. This plan-led approach will further ensure that local communities and other interested stakeholders can contribute to the DMAP establishment process, which will

determine the appropriate location for future offshore renewable energy in Ireland.

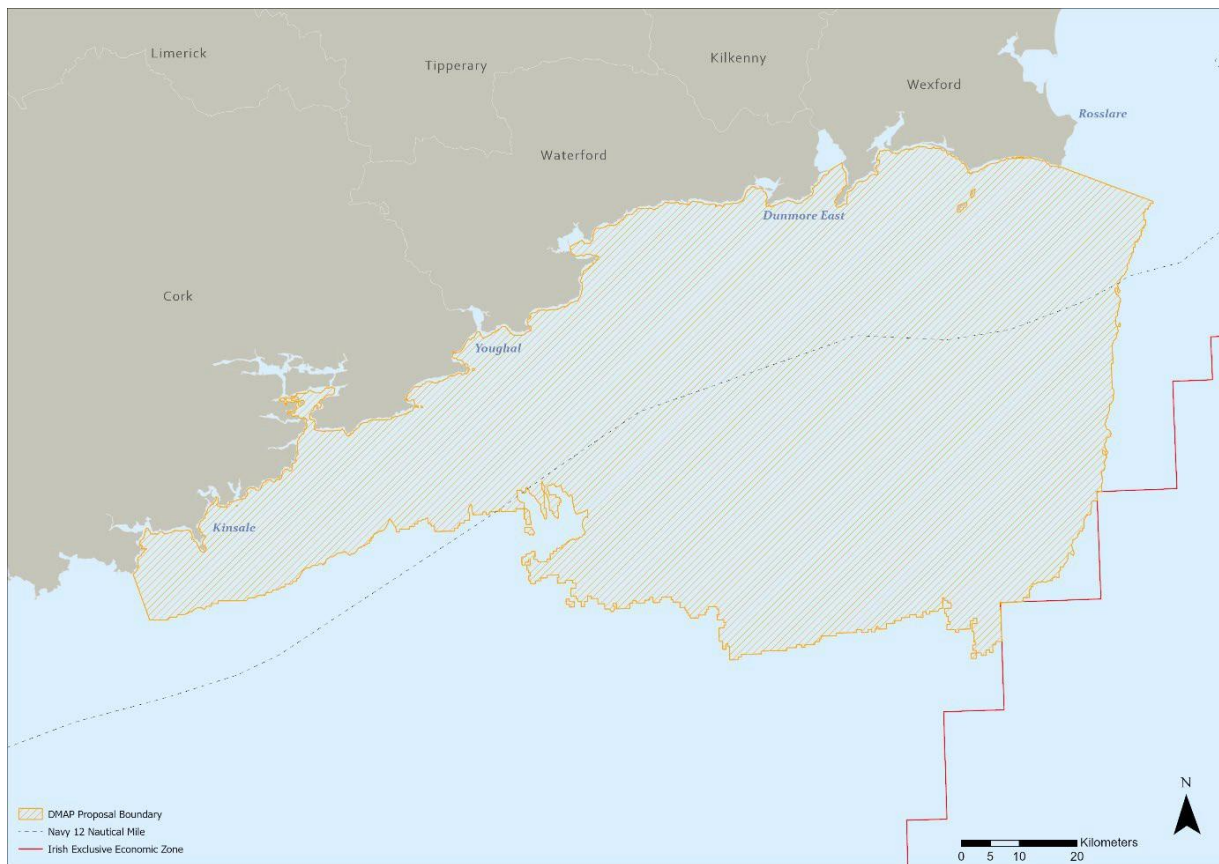
2 South Coast DMAP

In response to the escalating global climate emergency and in order to meet Ireland's legally binding objective of a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, the Government aims to achieve 5 GW of grid connected offshore wind by 2030. To accelerate the achievement of these targets, the Government has determined that Ireland's first offshore renewable energy DMAP will be situated off the South Coast. This decision reflects the analysis by Ireland's transmission system operator (TSO), EirGrid, that there is sufficient current available onshore grid capacity to connect between 700 MW and 900 MW of offshore wind capacity to the onshore transmission system along the South Coast. The establishment of a South Coast DMAP will therefore ensure that future offshore wind development is situated in proximity to the current availability of onshore grid capacity that will connect offshore wind generation to the onshore transmission system.

Beyond an additional development of 700 to 900 MW, for delivery by 2030, any further offshore wind development within the geographical area of the South Coast DMAP, or sub-areas within the DMAP, will take place according to a managed and phased approach. The timeline for any future developments will be contingent on the availability of onshore grid capacity, as well as Government energy and climate policies.

Following his designation as the Competent Authority for the preparation of offshore renewable energy DMAPs, and in line with statutory requirements, the Minister has prepared a South Coast DMAP Proposal, which was approved by the Minister for Housing on 5 July. This represents an initial proposed geographical area within which future offshore renewable energy may take place. The geographical area of the South Coast DMAP Proposal is outlined in figure 1 and extends from the maritime area stretching from High Water Mark on Ireland's south coast to the 80-metre depth contour and/or the edge of the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The western boundary of the geographical area is based on the location of military training and a restricted area defined by the Irish Aviation Authority, while the eastern extremity is the demarcation between the Irish Celtic Sea and Irish Sea, classified by the International Hydrographic Office.

Figure 1: South Coast DMAP Proposal Geographical Area



Following just over nine weeks of public engagement that took place during August-October 2023, assessment of the potential impacts of offshore renewables on other existing maritime usages, and ongoing environmental analysis, the Minister will now prepare a draft South Coast DMAP for submission to the Minister for Housing in early 2024.

The process to establish a draft DMAP, including a determination on the appropriate draft DMAP boundary, is taking place according to an ecosystem-based approach¹ following a period of engagement with key stakeholders and a review of other existing maritime usages. Any refinement of the geographical area of the DMAP Proposal will be further informed by environmental assessments to determine its suitability for development of offshore wind.

¹ The ecosystem approach can be defined as the comprehensive integrated management of human activities based on the best available scientific knowledge about the ecosystem and its dynamics, in order to identify and take action on influences, which are critical to the health of marine ecosystems, thereby achieving sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services and maintenance of ecosystem integrity ([OSPAR definition](#), taken from NMPF)

The draft DMAP and will identify specific marine areas within which future offshore wind will be deployed. The publication of the draft DMAP will be followed by a further period of statutory public consultation, prior to seeking the approval of the Minister for Housing and the Houses of the Oireachtas in summer 2024.

3 Public Engagement in DMAP Process

Under Section 23 of the Maritime Area Planning Act, the DMAP establishment process includes a statutory requirement to provide opportunities for comprehensive engagement between the Competent Authority and interested citizens and local communities. To facilitate this, the publication of any DMAP Proposal must be accompanied by a Public Participation Statement, to be published on the website of the Competent Authority, outlining opportunities for the involvement of interested persons in the DMAP establishment process. This Public Participation Statement must be laid before each House of the Oireachtas, to facilitate the engagement of any committee of the Oireachtas in the public engagement process. A decision to alter the anticipated public engagement throughout the DMAP establishment process must be reflected in an amendment to the Public Participation Statement published on the website of the Competent Authority. It is for this reason that this Public Participation Statement has been amended in November 2023.

Through providing multiple opportunities for public engagement, the establishment of DMAPs will also help to ensure that offshore renewable energy developments take place in the right locations and deliver the maximum benefit to local communities. Opportunities for public engagement in the process to establish DMAPs will also help to ensure that future development of offshore renewable energy takes place with consideration for other existing marine activities and usages, including fishing and seafood production, which is a vital source of income and employment for many coastal communities. Where possible, it will also provide for the co-existence of offshore renewable energy with other marine activities and usages.

To facilitate this public engagement, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (the Department) has established a dedicated webpage containing clear information on the process to establish the South Coast DMAP - southcoastDMAP.gov.ie. This webpage will continue to highlight all opportunities for public engagement in the DMAP establishment process, including planned in-person events to be held by the Department in locations across the South Coast, as well as online events. The dedicated webpage further outlines how and when written and online responses can be submitted by interested citizens. The Minister will also ensure that information on the opportunities for public participation during establishment of the South Coast DMAP is provided through local media based along the South Coast, as well as through social media.

The process to establish the South Coast DMAP includes the following opportunities for comprehensive public engagement. Future events will be subject to change, and any

changes will be communicated to the public:

1. 9-Week Public Engagement: August – October 2023

This initial period of targeted public engagement was extended an extra week and a half to allow for comprehensive engagement and ran for more than nine weeks from 1 August to 6 October 2023, with the intention of enabling as many interested citizens, local communities and key stakeholders as possible to contribute to the process to establish a Draft DMAP. Alongside environmental assessments, and analysis of potential impacts of offshore renewables on other maritime usages, this engagement will subsequently inform development by the Minister of a Draft DMAP, to be published in Spring 2024. In particular, this period included targeted engagement with local communities and groups engaged in or associated with other marine activities and usages, including the ORE Seafood Working Group.

Groups for targeted engagement included, but were not limited to, the fishing and seafood production industries, and environmental and other Non-Governmental Organisations. Engagement was also sought with local Government, Regional Assemblies, and local political representatives to ensure that as many potentially impacted maritime usages as possible are taken into account during the DMAP preparation.

This engagement was an opportunity for the public and key stakeholders to express views on the suitability of this geographical area of the DMAP Proposal for the development of offshore renewable energy, including any potential impacts of this development within the entirety or parts of this maritime space. In particular, it was an opportunity for groups and individuals engaged in other maritime usages to outline if and how development of offshore renewable energy could impact them.

Public engagement within this period included but was not limited to the following:

- Creation of a dedicated webpage on the website of the Department, southcoastDMAP.gov.ie, with clear information regarding the South Coast DMAP Proposal, the DMAP establishment process, and opportunities for the public to have their say.
- An extensive media campaign to advertise all in-person and online events throughout this public information engagement period. In tandem with updated notices and relevant updates provided on the Department's dedicated web page, southcoastDMAP@gov.ie, a press release was issued by the Department at the launch of the campaign when the South Coast DMAP Proposal webpage went live – this press release was issued nationally, and issued to local media in counties Cork, Waterford and Wexford. There were also notices posted on social media sites,

including X (Twitter), and LinkedIn prior to each event. Full-page and half-page notices of the events were also advertised in local newspapers in counties Waterford, Wexford, and Cork. In-depth articles outlining the South Coast DMAP Proposal and its schedule of events were targeted and placed within leading publications for key stakeholders, including 'The Skipper' (in print & online) - the leading publication of the Irish fishing community. Prior to events, in-depth local radio interviews were carried out by a senior Department official, on local radio stations in counties Waterford, Wexford and Cork, amounting to a total of more than 45 minutes airtime. Mailshots of the South Coast DMAP Proposal events were also issued to a large number of key stakeholder groups on numerous occasions during the public information period.

- Six in-person information sharing events were held by officials from the Department throughout towns and cities along the South Coast during August to October. This included in-person information events in Dunmore East, Tramore, An Rinn, Kinsale, Aghada, and Kilmore Quay. Further details were published on the website of the Department in September 2023, and communicated extensively through local South Coast media and social media.
- Two DMAP Workshop events, with presentations by Government officials followed by opportunities for Questions and Answers were held in Youghal and Waterford. Further details were published on the website of the Department in September 2023, and communicated extensively through local South Coast media and social media. These events were held in September.
- Two public information webinars, followed by Questions and Answers were also held on the South Coast DMAP Proposal on the evenings of the 12 and 28 September to incorporate groups and individuals who were unable to attend any of the in-person events. Further details were published on the website of the Department in September 2023, and communicated through local South Coast media and social media.
- Written submissions and responses to an online survey were sought by the Department. All submissions and survey responses will contribute to establishment of the Draft DMAP to be published in Spring 2024. A summary of received submissions and survey responses will be published alongside the Draft DMAP in early 2024.

2. Statutory Public Consultation: Spring - Summer 2024

A statutory public consultation will begin following publication of a draft DMAP by the Minister in Spring - Summer 2024. Publication of the draft DMAP will be accompanied by a draft Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and draft Appropriate Assessment (AA) that have been carried out on the draft DMAP. While the timeline for this consultation will be dependent on the publication date of the draft DMAP, it is currently expected to run from approximately May through June 2024.

This statutory public consultation will represent an opportunity for all interested citizens and key stakeholders, as well as groups engaged in other maritime activities, such as fishing, to have their say on the Draft South Coast DMAP and accompanying draft environmental assessments. It is important to note that the outcome of this consultation will determine whether a decision is made by the Minister to amend the Draft South Coast DMAP before seeking the approval of the Minister for Housing and the Oireachtas. A decision to amend the draft DMAP could require an additional further Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) to be carried out on the amended draft DMAP.

Consistent with the initial non-statutory public engagement period, this public consultation will include the following:

- A regularly updated dedicated webpage on the website of the Department, southcoastDMAP.gov.ie, with clear information regarding the South Coast DMAP establishment process, and opportunities for the public to have their say.
- At least 6 in-person information sharing events in towns and cities along the South Coast during May and June 2024. Venues and dates to be confirmed by the Department in April 2024.
- At least 3 Workshop events along the South Coast, with presentations by Government officials to be followed by opportunities for Questions and Answers. Venues and dates to be confirmed by the Department in April 2024.
- Written and online submissions and/or responses to an online survey will be sought by the Department. A summary of received submissions and survey responses will be published following completion of the statutory public consultation.

3. Additional Engagement with Public Bodies

Additional engagements were sought or already took place with the following public bodies during the initial 9-week period of public engagement and these will continue throughout all periods of public engagement until establishment of the DMAP has taken place. These public bodies include, but are not limited to;

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage along with relevant divisions such as Marine Planning Policy & Legislation and Marine Environment divisions
- Minister for Tourism, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
- Minister for Transport
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- An Taisce
- The Heritage Council
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Irish Water
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
- EirGrid
- Marine Institute
- Geological Survey Ireland
- Department of Defence
- Office of Public Works
- Maritime Area Regulatory Authority
- Commissioner of Irish Lights
- NPWS

- Irish Coastguard
- Southern Regional Assembly
- Coastal Planning Authorities

4. Proposed Timelines for establishment of the South Coast DMAP

The current envisaged timeline towards achieving the required statutory approval of both houses of the Oireachtas that will mark the formal establishment of the South Coast DMAP is as follows:

- July 2023: The Minister designated by the Minister for Housing as the Competent Authority for preparing Offshore Renewable Energy DMAPs, including an initial South Coast DMAP.
- July 2023: Following earlier preparation of South Coast DMAP Proposal, the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications to be invited to prepare a subsequent Draft DMAP by the Minister for Housing.
- August – October 2023: 9-week public engagement by the Competent Authority with interested citizens, including targeted engagement with key stakeholders. This process included in-person and online stakeholder engagement, as well as consideration of written/digital submissions. This will be followed by the publication of a Public Engagement summary report by the Minister.
- August 2023 – April 2024: Preparation of a Draft DMAP, including identification of areas for potential offshore renewable energy development, to account for public engagement outcomes and environmental analysis.
- Spring - Summer 2024: Statutory Public Consultation on Draft DMAP and associated SEA and AA. This will include in-person and online public engagement events, as well as consideration of written/digital submissions. A Public Consultation summary report will be published by the Minister.
- Summer 2024: Minister to decide upon any possible amendments to Draft DMAP taking into account Public Consultation outcomes, including written/digital submissions. A decision to amend the Draft DMAP would require an additional SEA and AA to be carried out on the amended Draft DMAP.
- Summer 2024: Minister to seek the approval of the Minister for Housing for a Draft DMAP (timeline contingent on possible amendments to Draft DMAP), following which the approval of Government will also be sought.
- Summer 2024: Minister/Government to seek the approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas for Draft DMAP.