



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 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; 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.

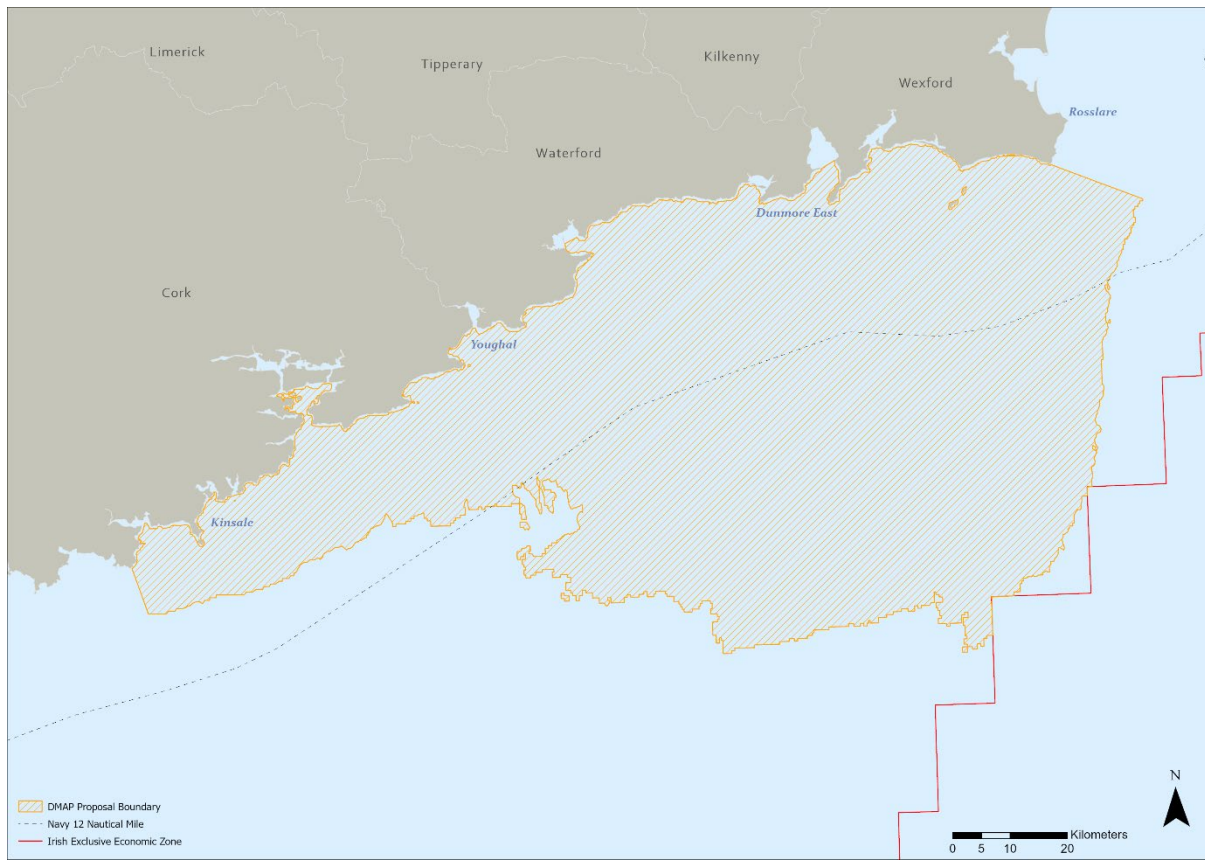
## 2 South Coast DMAP

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 Competent Authority designation, 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 marine 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 a military danger and 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 a period of public engagement, environmental analysis and an assessment of the potential impacts of offshore renewables on other existing maritime usages, the Minister will prepare a Draft South Coast DMAP, which if approved by the Minister for Housing may be published in Autumn 2023. The process to establish a Draft DMAP during Summer and Autumn 2023, including a determination on the appropriate Draft DMAP boundary, will take place according to an ecosystem based approach 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. It is therefore the intention of the Minister that a Draft DMAP to be published in the Autumn will encompass a smaller footprint than the map outlined in figure 1. This will be followed by a further period of statutory public consultation, prior to seeking the approval of the Minister for Housing and the Oireachtas for a final Draft DMAP in late 2023 or early 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.

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 will establish a dedicated webpage containing clear information on the process to establish the South Coast DMAP. It will further highlight all opportunities for public engagement in the DMAP establishment process, including planned in person events to be held by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in towns and cities across the South Coast, as well as online events. The dedicated webpage will further outline 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 will include the following anticipated opportunities for comprehensive public engagement, noting that these may be subject to change:

## 1. 8-Week Public Engagement: August – September 2023

This initial 8-week period of targeted public engagement will run from 1 August to 22 September 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 Autumn 2023. In particular, this will include 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 will include, but not necessarily be limited to, the fishing and seafood production industries, environmental and other Non-Governmental Organisations, ports and shipping operators, owners and developers of telecoms and electricity marine cables, tourism, sailing, and other recreational activities. Engagement will also be 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 will be 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 will be 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 will include but will not be limited to the following:

- Creation of a dedicated webpage on the website of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, with clear information regarding the South Coast DMAP Proposal, the DMAP establishment process, and opportunities for the public to have their say.
- At least 6 in-person information sharing events by officials from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications throughout towns and cities along the South Coast during August and September. This will include in-person information events in Cork, Cobh, Waterford, Dungarvan, Tramore, and Wexford. Further details will be published on the website of the Department of the Environment, Climate and

Communications in July 2023, and communicated through local South Coast and social media.

- At least 2 Town Hall-style events, with presentations by Government officials to be followed by opportunities for Questions and Answers. At a minimum, this will include events in Cork and Waterford. Further details will be published on the website of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in July 2023, and communicated through local South Coast and social media. These events will be held in September.
- Written and online submissions and responses to an online survey to be sought by the Department for the Environment, Climate and Communications. All submissions and survey responses will contribute to establishment of the Draft DMAP to be published in Autumn 2023. A summary of received submissions and survey responses will be published alongside the Draft DMAP.

Online submissions during this 8-week public engagement period may be sent to:

[southcoastdmap@DECC.gov.ie](mailto:southcoastdmap@DECC.gov.ie)

Written submissions may be addressed to:

South Coast DMAP

Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications,

29-31 Adelaide Road,

Dublin 2,

D02 X285

## **2. Statutory 6-Week Public Consultation: October – November 2023**

A 6-week statutory public consultation will begin following publication of a Draft DMAP by the Minister in Autumn 2023, which must be approved by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Publication of the Draft DMAP will be accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment and an Appropriate Assessment that have been carried out on the Draft DMAP. While the timeline for this 6-week consultation will be dependent on the publication date of the Draft DMAP, it is currently expected to run from approximately mid-October to the end of November.



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 Proposal and accompanying 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 would require an additional further Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment 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 of the Environment, Climate and Communications, with clear information regarding the South Coast DMAP Proposal, the 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 mid-October to late November. Venues and dates to be confirmed by the Department for the Environment, Climate, and Communications in September 2023.
- At least 2 roadshow 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 for the Environment, Climate, and Communications in September 2023.
- Written and online submissions and responses to an online survey to be sought by the Department for the Environment, Climate and Communications. 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 will take place with public bodies, which will be informed of the available periods for public engagement. These public bodies will include:

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- 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
- 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 this 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 – September 2023: 8-week public engagement by the Competent Authority with interested citizens, including targeted engagement with key stakeholders. This process will include 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 – October 2023: Preparation of a Draft DMAP, including identification of areas for potential offshore renewable energy development, to account for public engagement outcomes and environmental analysis.
- October 2023: The Minister to seek the approval of the Minister for Housing for a Draft South Coast DMAP. Contingent of this approval, the Minister will publish a Draft DMAP, including SEA and AA.
- October – November 2023: 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.
- December 2023: 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.
- December 2023: 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.
- December 2023/January 2024: Minister/Government to seek the approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas for Draft DMAP.
- December 2023/January 2024: Oireachtas approval would be followed by the commencement of a competitive auction for the development of up to 900 MW offshore wind capacity within a pre-determined sub-area of the South Coast DMAP.