



ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Designated Maritime Area Plans

by **Philip Daly, Jamie Ritchie**

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Developing Ireland's Offshore Renewable Energy

To accelerate the delivery of offshore wind, the Government announced in March 2023 that offshore wind capacity would be developed through designated areas for offshore renewable energy (ORE).

Designated areas will be developed according to a 'plan-led approach', known as a Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP), as provided for under the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021.

DMAPs

It is the Government's view that the introduction of DMAPs initiates a "systemic, plan-led development of our huge off-shore wind potential ... [that] will determine the broad area where offshore renewable energy projects can be developed, and will act as a management plan for a specific area of our marine waters".

DMAPs will be developed in consultation with local communities and relevant stakeholders. Consideration will be given to other maritime activities in the area, such as fishing and seafood production, to assist in determining the appropriate locations for offshore renewable energy developments.

Prior to the introduction of DMAPs, some developers had thought that the development of ORE would be developer led and had begun investing in surveys off the coast of Ireland. While the developers, who had already invested in surveying certain areas that are potentially outside the area of future DMAPs, may have initially been unhappy with this approach; the feeling seems to be that a plan led approach is a more robust process for the development of an Irish ORE industry in the long term.

Process

The Government is working on its first draft DMAP.

The first DMAP will be located off the South Coast of Ireland. Following a public consultation and input from experts in the field, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications will shortly publish a draft DMAP for the area. It will identify a number of potential ORE development areas. Then a further statutory public consultation will be held before the DMAP is finally presented to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage and both Houses of the Oireachtas for approval. This is expected to occur by summer 2024.

When the DMAP is approved, the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority will assess applications for Maritime Area Consent, which is necessary for the construction of offshore energy projects.

Our commentary on the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 can be read [here](#).

Locations

The South Coast DMAP is focused on fixed bottom offshore wind with up to 900MW of ORE to be build out in the designated area intended to be split into two connections of approximately 450 MW at two locations. However, future DMAPs will allow for a variety of technologies to include fixed, floating, wave and tidal. The consultation process for future DMAPs is expected to begin in late 2024.

The locations of the next DMAPs will be determined by Department of Environment, Climate and Communications. A public consultation on the proposed offshore renewable energy (ORE) Future Framework Policy Statement was launched by the Department earlier this year and recently closed. It is intended that the Framework Statement will be finalised shortly with a remit to identify suitable offshore sites with the capacity for 20GW by 2024 and a minimum of 37GW by 2050 which will help guide the DMAP process.

Thoughts

The plans are ambitious and whilst progress in developing ORE in Ireland may be slower than hoped, DMAPs are part of the framework being developed to realise a robust and long-term ORE industry in Ireland.

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