



Circular: MP 01/2024

15th November 2024

To: The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority

Re: Clarification in respect the plan-led approach to offshore renewable energy developments and research and innovation proposals in the maritime area

A chara,

The Government's March 2023 Policy Statement on the Framework for Phase Two Offshore Wind committed Ireland to an accelerated programme to achieve a 5 GW target by 2030, in the framework of a State plan led approach to offshore wind development. The Phase Two Policy specifies that all future offshore wind developments must be within sites designated by the State via Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs) approved by the Oireachtas in accordance with the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (MAP Act).

Arising from this policy statement, Government agreed (in May 2023) that as a consequence of the move to a fully plan-led approach to offshore energy development, no new applications for developer-led offshore renewable energy (ORE) activity should be accepted by consenting bodies. In addition, the assessment and determination of existing consent applications relating to prospective ORE site investigation activity should be paused until the ORE Designated Areas, which will be designated according to legislative provisions for Designated DMAPs in the MAP Act have statutory effect.

The Policy Statement and subsequent Government decision makes it clear that all further offshore energy development must be determined as part of a plan-led structure, underpinned by ORE DMAPs. The intent of this policy framework is to ensure that development in the maritime area takes place in a planned manner consistent with the objectives of maritime spatial planning. Proposals for substantial developer-led offshore energy development, located in areas that have not been designated for ORE in accordance with a DMAP are not consistent with the Government's Policy Statement.



It is acknowledged that some proposals which can be broadly categorised as ‘research and innovation’, encompassing, wave, tidal etc. are not included in the Policy Statement – which as set out above, is directed at significant developer-led ORE developments. The Department can clarify that proposals that constitute research and innovation and that are of a small-scale and duration are considered compatible with the overall objective of supporting the longer-term offshore renewable energy programme.

Is mise le meas,

Rory O’Leary
Principal
Marine Planning Policy