Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Consultation

Draft National Ports Policy

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Consultation Draft

Prepared by the Department of Transport

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Ministerial Forewords

Foreword by Minister O'Brien

I am pleased to introduce the revision of the National Ports Policy, which sets out the updated policy framework for the State-owned commercial port sector—a sector that is crucial to our economic well-being and a key enabler of our renewable energy future. The National Ports Policy is one of the most significant policies in transport, as recognised in the Programme for Government 2025: Securing Ireland's Future. This revision provides the necessary support for our ports to navigate the increasing demands being placed on them and to embrace the opportunities of the future.

The ports and shipping sectors are the often-overlooked cornerstones of Ireland's economy, facilitating the movement of over 90% of our traded goods by volume. While Ireland's maritime industry continues to demonstrate strength and resilience in the face of global uncertainty, it must be ready to address the new realities, challenges, and opportunities presented by decarbonisation, renewable energy, digitalisation, and technological innovation.

The revised National Ports Policy provides a robust policy framework for an ever-changing future. It builds on the success of its predecessor, National Ports Policy 2013, which provided the platform for our State-owned commercial port network to remain competitive and responsive to the needs of the country. The updated policy sets out a new roadmap to ensure that our ports continue to develop the infrastructure required to support Ireland's trade and sustainability goals into the future.

As key national infrastructure, our ports now have a clear mandate to deliver on their respective masterplans to ensure they have the capacity to meet future demands. The strategic importance of the *Ports of National Significance*—Dublin Port Company, Port of Cork Company, Shannon Foynes Port Company, Port of Waterford Company, and Rosslare Europort—is reaffirmed. These ports will continue to lead on the facilitation of trade and will also take a leading role in the development of renewable energy, particularly offshore energy.

The increasingly multi-faceted demands being placed on State-owned commercial port companies are recognised, including the requirement to contribute to national climate action goals. Our ports will need to balance commercial considerations with actions that serve the broader public interest. The Government is firmly committed to working with our ports to achieve this shared success.

Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister for Transport

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Foreword by Minister of State Canney

As Minister of State with responsibility for international and road transport, logistics, rail, and ports, I welcome the publication of the revision of the National Ports Policy.

Our State-owned commercial ports are the gateway and lifeline of our open economy. Ireland is one of only three island countries in the European Union. Not only is Ireland more reliant on its sea connectivity than our European counterparts, but our ports are increasingly at the forefront of supporting the State's energy transition and the decarbonisation of transport and other sectors. Our future prosperity is intrinsically linked to their continued success.

I am pleased that so many stakeholders engaged constructively during the development of this important policy document. As Minister, I have a deep appreciation of the balance provided by the large commercial *Ports of National Significance* and the smaller community-based *Ports of Regional Significance*. The latter serve as important facilitators of trade for their regional and local hinterlands. In line with the National Development Plan 2026–2035, they are key to ensuring more balanced regional development—not only economically, but also as centres of marine-related amenity and tourism activities. The investments set out in the *Sectoral Investment Plan for Transport 2026–2030* will further enhance this hinterland connectivity.

I wish to acknowledge the work of the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) in the development of this policy and during the closure of Holyhead Port in December 2024. Its contribution to policy and regulatory initiatives, as well as its essential research, is invaluable to the sector. I believe that establishing the IMDO as a standalone State agency will be a positive step in fostering further innovation within the sector and promoting it for the benefit of port employees and the State.

The policy recognises that while competitiveness within and between ports remains important, our ports increasingly operate in a complementary manner on issues such as tackling climate impacts and managing weather-related disruptions, which are becoming more frequent and severe. The policy also reflects broader themes that will shape the future landscape of all ports with commercial activity, including the issue of the ownership of Rosslare Europort.

Finally, given the paramount importance of maritime safety, I welcome the commitment to developing a Port Marine Code, which will contribute to safer, more efficient, and internationally recognised marine operations, while crucially minimising the risk of incidents that endanger life and disrupt operations.

Seán Canney TD, Minister of State with Responsibility for International and Road Transport, Logistics, Rail and Ports

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1 Introduction

The mission of the Department of Transport ('the Department'), as set out in its *Statement of Strategy 2025-2028*, is to deliver an accessible, efficient, safe and sustainable transport system that supports communities, households and businesses. A key goal in fulfilling this mission is ensuring Ireland's international connectivity. As an island nation, the maritime dimension of this connectivity is of significant importance. Ireland's maritime connectivity, in line with all transport policies, is to be delivered in an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable manner that puts safety, security and accessibility for all at its centre.

The revised National Ports Policy provides the overarching policy framework for the governance and future development of Ireland's State-owned commercial port network. The responsiveness and competitiveness of Ireland's maritime transport industry are underpinned by National Ports Policy. It has helped foster competition between ports and created relatively low barriers to entry for shipping companies seeking to enter the Irish market.

The current National Ports Policy was approved by Government in 2013. This was at a time when Ireland, and its port sector, were still dealing with the consequences of the global financial crisis. Over the subsequent years, the broad objectives outlined by the policy have been achieved. Ports have been categorised in order of National Significance, a move that aligned our ports with the then-emerging European Union Trans-European Transport Network (EU TEN-T Network). The policy gave our ports a clear direction, placing their role firmly within the planning hierarchy and encouraged ports to develop master plans. The *National Ports Policy 2013*, and subsequently the *Harbours Act 2015*, facilitated the transfer of the five ports of regional significance[1], to more appropriate local

[1] Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company, Wicklow Port Company, Drogheda Port Company, New Ross Port Company, and Galway Harbour Company.

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authority control. In quarter three, 2023, the Department launched a public consultation with the publication of the '*Review of National Ports Policy 2013 Issues Paper* (2023)'. The majority of stakeholders, who commented on the structure and governance of Irish ports during this consultation, were positive about the relationship between local authorities and the transferred ports.

The national and international environment for which the 2013 policy was developed has changed fundamentally. Several of the responses received to the *Review of National Ports Policy 2013 Issues Paper* (2023) highlighted the need to develop a revised approach to assisting our ports with the environmental, technological, demographic, and geopolitical challenges of the next decade and beyond. These new challenges require a new roadmap.

A joint Deloitte and European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) study, *Europe's Ports at the Crossroads of Transitions* (2021), analysed the main drivers/trends impacting Europe's ports, with the view of defining the changing role of ports in Europe. This report identifies four individual drivers (or "megatrends"), that are jointly influencing the outlook of the port industry towards 2030 and beyond: (i) environmental (ii) technological (iii) geopolitical and (iv) demographic. Successful ports over the next 20 years will be the ones that are able to navigate this changing landscape.

These megatrends impact the international economy, cascading down to value and supply chains, through to transport chains and finally directly impacting port and shipping operations. This places an onus on governments and public administrations, as well as port operators, to put policies in place to prepare for this changing trading and environmental reality.

The environmental megatrend is of great importance and is addressed in Chapter 5. With regards to technology, it is recognised that the pace of change is ever-increasing, and the port and shipping sectors are not immune to its impacts. Technological breakthroughs, digitalisation, and automation present the port sector with the potential

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for greater efficiency in operations and radical change in their operating models. By improving the flow of information and communication between all port stakeholders, those ports that embrace the benefits of technology give themselves a competitive advantage in the marketplace. With increased digitisation through technological advances, it is also crucial to ensure that suitable cybersecurity frameworks are developed. Security considerations also apply to the wider geopolitical context. Shifts in global power dynamics and initiatives like China's Belt and Road, are also influencing trade and port operations. Ports are increasingly viewed as strategic assets amid rising global uncertainties.

The growth of ports is typically linked to the population increase in surrounding areas, which drives demand for goods, cargo flows, and port capacity. In Europe, this trend pressures ports in major urban centres, highlighting the relationship between ports and cities and the need for efficient urban distribution. Ports must now provide greater value and sustainability to maintain their social license to operate, as development projects often face opposition. Early community engagement is key to port development. In Ireland, population growth projections (17.7% to 41.2% by 2051 according to CSO) and the *Project Ireland 2040* strategy emphasise balanced regional development, making future port capacity essential.

It is imperative that the maritime industry has the right people with the right skills to effectively harness new technology. Not only this, but Ireland's economy and security are best served when we are striving to be a centre for maritime innovation. It was the flexibility and dynamism of our ports and maritime colleagues that safeguarded the country during times of acute strain such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit. This resilience cannot be taken for granted.

The Marine Institute's '*Ireland's Ocean Economy*' publication in December 2023, calculated the 'Gross Value Added' of 'Shipping and Maritime Transport' in 2022 was €664m. It listed the overall turnover of Ireland's shipping and maritime transport sector at approximately €2.5 billion and recorded almost 5,000 people as being employed in the sector.

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The challenges posed by Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic to our national supply chains highlighted our reliance on an efficient and well-functioning maritime transport sector as never before.

Over 90% of goods by volume traded by Ireland enter and exit through our State-owned commercial port network. The old saying of "if you bought it, a ship brought it" is as true today as ever before. As facilitators for our national economy, the efficient functioning of our ports directly impacts the life of every citizen.

However, the importance of our ports is not just economic. Located, as many ports are, in the heart of urban centres and areas of environmental significance, how our ports interact with both the communities that provide their social licence to operate, and the marine environment is something in which we all have a vested interest. This revised policy will provide the vision for how our ports will meet these wider challenges.

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2 Organisational and Ownership Structures

2.1 Background to the ownership structure of State-owned commercial port companies

The *Harbours Act 1946* brought all commercial harbour authorities under a single piece of legislation. Under the 1946 Act, these harbour authorities were run as not-for-profit public utilities. They were subject to a high degree of central government control and financed by user charges and some Exchequer funding from time to time. The *Harbours Act 1996* introduced significant reforms by providing for the more substantial harbour authorities to be State-owned commercial port companies. Following the introduction of corporatisation in 1996, ten port companies were formed. Today, six of these companies remain in existence, Dublin Port Company, Port of Cork Company, Shannon Foynes Port Company, Port of Waterford Company, Drogheda Port Company and Galway Harbour Company.

In addition, two commercial ports are operating outside of the remit of the Harbours Acts 1996–2015. The port of Greenore, Co. Louth can be regarded as the State's only private port. Rosslare Europort is unique among the State-owned ports as it is not a commercial company operating under the Harbours Acts but is run on a commercial basis as a division of Irish Rail.

In principle, the National Ports Policy sets out the policy framework for the commercial ports sector that fall fully under the aegis of the Department as per the Harbours Act. These State-owned commercial port companies are as follows: Dublin Port Company; Port of Cork Company; Shannon Foynes Port Company; and the Port of Waterford Company. However, the policy also reflects the broader themes that will serve to shape the future landscape of all ports with commercial activity, including the issue of the ownership of Rosslare Europort.

2.2 Development of National Ports Policy

Irish ports policy was first outlined in a single document, the Government's Ports Policy Statement, in 2005. At the time, the State-owned commercial ports sector consisted of 10

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port companies established and operated according to the Harbours Acts 1996. The companies were private commercial companies whose shareholders comprised the Minister for Transport, who held 99% of shares and the then Minister for Finance (now the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation), who held 1% of shares. The Minister for Transport appointed both the chairperson and board members. Concerning the funding of infrastructure requirements in the sector, the Statement was clear that the port companies must not rely on Government support but should instead fund any infrastructure developments through their own resources or in conjunction with private sector partners.

A review of the 2005 *Ports Policy Statement* commenced in 2010 with the finalised National Ports Policy receiving Government approval in March 2013. In 2013, a report by the Competition Authority looked at competition in the Irish ports sector both at intra- and inter-port level. The core objective of *National Ports Policy 2013* was to facilitate a competitive and effective market for maritime transport services. The policy introduced several important reforms and introduced the categorisation of the commercial port companies into three tiers based on trade volumes.

In the *National Ports Policy 2013*, the *Ports of National Significance* (Tier 1) were ports that: were responsible for 15% or more of overall national tonnage through Irish ports; and had clear potential to lead the development of future port capacity in the medium and long term. These ports were Dublin Port Company, the Port of Cork Company and Shannon Foynes Port Company.

The *Ports of National Significance* (Tier 2) were ports that: were responsible for at least 2.5% of overall tonnage through Irish ports; had the clear demonstrable potential to handle higher volumes of unitised traffic; and had the existing transport links to serve a wider, national marketplace beyond their immediate region. These ports were the Port of Waterford Company and Rosslare Europort. These ports, in serving their immediate region,

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had the potential to affect the reduction of the land transport of goods, which, in turn, would create benefits through the reduction of traffic congestion, air pollution and greenhouse gases from shorter transport distances.

The remaining commercial ports (under 2.5% of overall tonnage) were categorised as Ports of Regional Significance. This category included Drogheda Port Company, Galway Harbour Company, Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company, New Ross Port Company and Wicklow Port Company and all other ports that handle commercial freight.

The *National Ports Policy 2013* recommended that the five designated Ports of Regional Significance be transferred to more appropriate local authority-led governance structures. It outlined that these five Ports of Regional Significance retained essential roles as facilitators of their regional economies and, in some instances, as centres of marine-related amenity and tourism activities. However, the scale and nature of these activities did not warrant continued central Government involvement. The *Harbours Act 2015* provided the necessary primary legislative framework to transfer the five Ports of Regional Significance to their respective local authorities. Several responses received to the *Review of National Ports Policy 2013 Issues Paper* (2023) suggested that the move to local authority-led governance has proven positive and has provided the impetus for regional ports to focus on regional needs and core activities.

The classification in the National Ports Policy 2013 of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports is no longer appropriate for the purposes of this National Ports Policy as all such ports are given equal consideration in terms of leading the development of future capacity needs of the State. On this basis the five ports referenced as Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports in the National Ports Policy 2013 shall collectively be referenced in this National Ports Policy as '*Ports of National Significance*'.

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Table 1 **Percentage of National Trade Volume by Port**

Year	National Trade Volume (source CSO)	Dublin Port	Port of Cork	Shannon Foynes Port	Rosslare Euro-port	Port of Waterford	Drogheda Port	Port of Galway
2025: Percentage	100%	47.25%	17.77%	17.14%	6.68%	4.47%	2.26%	0.72%
2025: Tonnage	53.90m	25.47m	9.58m	9.24m	3.60m	2.41m	1.22m	0.39m
2024: Percentage	100%	48.71%	15.90%	17.90%	6.74%	4.15%	2.12%	0.86%
2024: Tonnage	51.06m	24.87m	8.12m	9.14m	3.44m	2.12m	1.08m	0.44m
2023: Percentage	100%	51.61%	18.36%	12.70%	7.03%	3.74%	2.20%	1.00%
2023: Tonnage	47.80m	24.67m	8.78m	6.07m	3.36m	1.79m	1.05m	0.48m
2022: Percentage	100%	50.05%	18.41%	19.17%	5.97%	3.92%	1.95%	0.53%
2022: Tonnage	53.16m	25.64m	9.43m	9.82m	3.06m	2.01m	1.00m	0.27m
2021: Percentage	100%	43.53%	18.90%	21.13%	5.69%	3.84%	2.75%	0.91%

2021: Tonnage	53.90m	24.94m	9.81m	10.97m	2.96m	1.99m	1.23m	0.47m
2020: Percentage	100%	45.73%	19.99%	18.99%	3.20%	3.70%	2.87%	0.90%
2020: Tonnage	51.36m	25.64m	9.96m	9.46m	1.60m	1.84m	1.29m	0.45m
2019: Percentage	100%	44.12%	18.36%	18.74%	3.97%	3.60%	3.42%	1.08%
2019: Tonnage	53.24m	26.30m	9.43m	9.62m	2.04m	1.85m	1.53m	0.55m

2.3 Rosslare Europort legacy ownership structure

Rosslare Europort enjoys a significant proportion of Irish RoRo (Roll-On, Roll-Off freight cargo, which can be accompanied or unaccompanied by a driver) traffic, is the fourth largest port in terms of overall tonnage handled, and the State's second largest passenger port.

Rosslare Europort is unique among the State-owned commercial ports as it operates outside of the Harbours Acts 1996–2009. The port is owned by the Fishguard and Rosslare Railways and Harbour Company (FRRHC), which owes its origins to the *Fishguard Bay Railway and Pier Act 1893*. The constituent ports of the company (Rosslare and Fishguard, in south Wales) are nowadays the operational and financial responsibility of Iarnród Éireann and Stena Line Ports Ltd respectively. On account of this historic arrangement, Rosslare Europort is operated as a division of Iarnród Éireann. As it is not a separate corporate entity, it cannot presently be accurately compared in terms of turnover, overheads and employees to the other port companies. This limits the ability to adequately benchmark its performance.

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A number of studies, including the *High-Level Review of the State Commercial Ports* (2003) and the Joint Committee on Transport's *Report on the Ports Sector* (2010) have highlighted the potentially inhibiting factor of the port's unusual legislative and operational status, when compared to the other State-owned ports, and recommended its integration within the State commercial port governance framework. National Ports Policy is committed to ensuring that the full commercial and operational potential of Rosslare Europort is achieved.

The United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU has had profound implications for our trading relations with the UK and the remaining EU Member States. In the first six months of 2021, the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) reported that RoRo between Ireland and the UK declined by 30%, while RoRo traffic between Ireland and the EU (continental Europe) had almost doubled. This represented an unprecedented shift in trade flows. These statistics point to a shift away from using the UK land bridge as exporters and importers search for ways to avoid potential delays and additional customs checks introduced by Brexit.

It is recognised that Rosslare Europort's location is favourable in terms of enhancing direct maritime connectivity and services to Europe. It is also recognised that the port has plans to develop infrastructure suitable to receiving vessels carrying wind turbines and to contribute to future offshore renewable energy projects. The policy recognises that such infrastructure may also contribute to future additional trade capacity at ports that facilitate the development of offshore renewable energy projects.

2.4 Potential for Consolidation in the State-owned commercial port network

Integrating port operations can improve efficiency, reduce duplication, and better align with national economic and environmental goals. Methods of consolidation could involve merging administrative functions, harmonising investment strategies, or even integrating port authorities under a more centralised governance model.

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Ports are strategic partners in enabling the greening of our energy supplies. By acting as facilitators for the development of offshore renewable energy (ORE), ports have a pivotal role in the evolution of more sustainable energy sources such as wind and green hydrogen. Ports must have the necessary infrastructure in place to allow them to grasp this opportunity. This may necessitate greater coordination of port operations and investment, which could be facilitated through consolidation or closer collaboration among ports.

Policy Objective 1:

The Department of Transport shall consider (a) modernising the ownership structure and legislation governing the status of Rosslare Europort and (b) whether consolidation in the State-owned commercial port network would unlock additional competitive and investment opportunities.

2.5 Private Ports

The national ports system represents key strategic infrastructure. It serves as the essential gateway for the arrival of goods, exports, security of energy supply and development of offshore renewable energy. National Ports Policy recognises the dynamic geopolitical context in which ports operate, therefore the development of large-scale private ports warrants careful consideration. It is noted that there is one private port in the State, the port of Greenore. This port provides marine and logistical support services across a range of industries such as agri-feed, construction, renewable energy, livestock exports and manufacturing.

2.6 Overview of the European Union's TEN-T Network

The trans-European transport network (TEN-T) is a European-wide network of roads, rail lines, ports and airports. The components of the TEN-T network and infrastructure requirements across the network are set out in Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 known as the TEN-T Regulation.

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The trans-European transport network is designed according to an objective methodology. It consists of three layers, the core network, the extended core network and the comprehensive network.

The core network includes the most important connections between major cities and nodes and must be completed by 2030. The extended core network needs to be completed ten years later, in 2040. The comprehensive network connects all regions of the EU to the core network and needs to be completed by 2050.

In terms of designation under TEN-T the Greater Dublin Area Port Cluster (including the Drogheda Port Company and Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company), Port of Cork Company and Shannon Foynes Port Company are the Irish ports on the core network. Rosslare Europort, the Port of Waterford Company and the Galway Harbour Company are on the comprehensive network.

The TEN-T Regulation also sets out high-priority 'European Transport Corridors', which link passenger and freight transport networks across Europe. Ireland is included on two of these: namely the 'Atlantic Corridor' and the 'North Sea-Rhine-Mediterranean Corridor'.

National Ports Policy notes that the revised TEN-T Regulation recognises Offshore Renewable Energy-related port infrastructure as maritime transport infrastructure and that the revised TEN-T regulation considers ports contribution to the supply of the energy sector as well as trade volumes.

2.7 Connecting Europe Facility for Transport

The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for Transport is the European Union funding instrument that supports the development of the TEN-T network in line with the EU's long-term climate goals. CEF funding is delivered in the form of grants allocated following competitive calls for proposals. Inclusion on the TEN-T network is required to be eligible to apply. Funding rates vary depending on the conditions of each call and the type of project, whether studies or works, generally ranging from 30% to 50% of eligible costs.

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Applications for CEF funding are submitted to the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA), which works in partnership with the European Commission. CINEA to assess all applications and monitor the implementation of successful projects.

Table 2 CEF Funding by Port since 2014

Year	Dublin Port Company	Port of Cork Company	Shannon Foynes Port Company	Rosslare Europort
2014	€1,232,000	-	-	-
2015	€928,730	€2,301,427.92	€1,100,000	-
2016	€912,682	€967,000	-	-
2017	€1,870,193	-	-	-
2018	€159,261	-	€429,132	-
2019	€1,914,081	€2,197,095	€259,273	-
2020	€803,790	€379,273	-	-
2021	€3,369,703	€1,280,476	-	-
2022	-	€1,347,592	€1,258,875	-

2023	€3,491,474	€80,058	-	-
2024	€18,439,957*	€13,446,116*	-	-

**The figures in the table are the amounts received in 2024 and are part of larger grant funding awarded to Dublin Port Company and the Port of Cork Company of €73,800,000 and €34,400,000 respectively in July 2024. The remainder will be drawn down subject to completion of works set out in the grant agreements between CINEA and the individual port companies.*

2.8 Future Requirements for TEN-T network ports

By 2030, core network ports must be connected to rail and road infrastructure. Core network ports that serve freight traffic must also have at least one multimodal freight terminal, which is open to all operators and users in a non-discriminatory way, and which applies transparent and non-discriminatory charges. These requirements will apply to comprehensive network ports by 2050.

In line with *Regulation (EU) 2023/1804 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 September 2023* on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure, both core network and comprehensive network ports will have to have shoreside electricity for ships above 5,000 gross tonnes while berthed at the quayside, where the annual number of ship calls is: over 100 seagoing container ships, over 40 Roll-On, Roll-Off vehicular trade passenger vessels or over 25 cruise vessels.

In line with *Directive (EU) 2019/883 on port reception facilities for the delivery of waste from ships*, both core and comprehensive ports must have port reception facilities that have the capacity to receive the types and quantities of waste from ships normally using that port and must ensure that all personnel receive the necessary training.

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3 Corporate Governance

3.1 Introduction

The State-owned commercial port companies are valuable assets and have important economic, social and environmental functions. It is incumbent on those entrusted with the management of these assets that the ports fulfil the expectations of the shareholder, the public interest and the economy at large. The Department is committed to ensuring that regular meetings at both Ministerial and official levels occur with the boards and executives of the port companies to ensure that the expectations of the State as shareholder are embedded within all levels of corporate and commercial development.

The *Review of National Ports Policy 2013 Issues Paper* (2023) refers to the potential for a system of regular performance measurement. The development of a performance measurement system should not occur in isolation, rather it must be viewed within the broader context of the development of port performance indicators at a European level. The Department, building on prior work already undertaken by the IMDO will consult with relevant national stakeholders to determine how best to implement and monitor performance measurement in the sector. It is recognised that any such performance management system must take account of the characteristics of each port in determining relevant key performance indicators.

Policy Objective 2:

The Department of Transport, in consultation with the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) and the State-owned commercial port companies shall introduce a national port performance measurement system to aid Government's evaluation of its shareholding in the State-owned commercial port companies.

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3.2 The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies

All State bodies, including the port companies, must adhere to the requirements of the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016). The Code seeks to provide a framework for the application of best practice in corporate governance across the State sector. Government expects State bodies to provide leadership by meeting the highest standards in all their commercial and non-commercial dealings. The *Annex on Gender Balance, Diversity, and Inclusion* (2020) supplements the existing Code.

3.3 Port Company Boards

For each company to achieve its full potential, it is essential that its board be active and contain the appropriate balance of skills. In particular, each board should contain members with appropriate accounting, legal, commercial and maritime/logistics training or experience. The relevance of board members having a range of appropriate skills, particularly in terms of maritime and or logistics expertise and experience was highted in the consultation process.

The *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016) states that boards should regularly review their operation and seek to identify ways to improve effectiveness. The Code suggests that this review should include an identification of gaps in competencies at board level; it states that, where such gaps are identified, chairpersons should advise the Minister in due time ahead of any vacancies arising. The Government encourages this practice among the State-owned commercial port companies.

It is important that all board members be aware that they are Ministerial appointees who, in addition to their legal and fiduciary responsibilities, must ensure that due regard is given to Government policy in decision-making. Board members are not appointed to, and should not seek to, represent local or sectoral interests. To ensure that conflicts of interest do not arise, the *Harbours (Amendment) Act 2009* prevents ports users from being appointed to port company boards. Furthermore, the previous practice of having local

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authority members directly appointed by right to the board of commercial State port companies was ended.

In relation to chairpersons, all new and re-appointed chairpersons shall be required to appear before the relevant Oireachtas Committee before their appointment takes effect. The only exception to this shall be short temporary re-appointments. A number of changes have been introduced in relation to the boards of Port Companies. In 2011, the Government introduced new arrangements for appointments to State Boards generally, and guidelines were published by the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation in 2014. Now all appointments are advertised openly on the State Boards dedicated portal www.stateboards.ie operated by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). Applications are processed by way of a transparent assessment system designed and implemented by the independent PAS.

The *Harbours Act 2015* also introduced a number of important reforms in relation to the boards of Port Companies, the main one being a set of required skillsets the Minister should adhere to when appointing board members: Section 30 (7)(a) of the 2015 Act requires the Minister to ensure that the board includes persons with wide experience and competence in maritime transport services, financial matters, legal matters and trade and commerce. Section 30(7)(b) of the Act states the Minister shall have regard to the desirability of there being appointed persons with wide experience and competence in areas such as infrastructure planning and development amongst others.

The chairperson is responsible for leadership of the board and ensuring its effectiveness in all aspects of its role. The chairperson is required to submit a comprehensive report to the Minister in conjunction with the annual report and financial statements in accordance with the specific reporting requirements set out in paragraph 1.9 of *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016) – *Business and Financial Reporting Requirements*. The chairperson's comprehensive report to the Minister is a confidential letter from the chairperson of the board to the Minister. It includes items such as affirmation that Government policy is being complied with, significant post-balance sheet events, a

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statement on the system of internal control and an outline of all commercially significant developments affecting the Company in the preceding year.

Finally, National Ports Policy places a strong emphasis on the retention of corporate memory on the boards of the State-owned commercial port companies. However, this should not impede a regular turnover of board members. Therefore, board appointments should be staggered, with ideally no more than three vacancies to any board arising within a calendar year.

3.4 Dividend Policy

The State-owned commercial ports sector is very diverse, with companies of very differing capabilities and financial performance. It should also be acknowledged that the ports return a non-financial dividend to the State in the form of the wider socio-economic benefits that they provide through trade facilitation, public amenity value, for example. It is Government policy that profitable State-owned port companies should pay a financial dividend to the State. Dividends paid shall be in alignment with government dividend policy (as presently set out in DPER Circular 07/2025).

Additionally, the Shareholders would expect a significant special dividend in circumstances where there are exceptional or windfall gains. There is a clear expectation that this special dividend would be more than 30% and up to 100% of after-tax profits.

Section 41(4)(b) of the *Harbours Act 1996* provides a mechanism whereby the Minister, after consultation with the Minister for Finance, may direct individual port companies to pay a dividend. Where the Minister is not satisfied with the dividend policy adopted by a port company, consideration will be given to initiating this mechanism.

The Government expects all the port companies to have a clearly stated dividend policy. Dividend policy should take account of issues such as current and projected profitability, capital investment plans, conditions related to borrowings and pension funding.

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3.5 Future Funding

Some respondents to the Issues Paper cited drivers for potentially allowing State funding of ports, which included: supporting future trade and international connectivity needs; supporting the development of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) projects; mitigation against climate-related risks; contributing to decarbonising transport and achieving the targets of the Government's Climate Action Plan.

The policy outlined in the 2005 *Ports Policy Statement* and maintained in the *National Ports Policy 2013* was that the ports sector should receive no further Exchequer funding for infrastructure development or otherwise. Given the multi-faceted demands now being made of State-owned commercial port companies, including the requirement to contribute to climate action goals, the restrictiveness of this policy warrants modification.

The Government retains the option to invest in the capital infrastructure of Ports of National Significance under the aegis and remit of the Minister for Transport, and under the aegis and remit of relevant local authorities and the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Such investment may be required with a view to: climate adaptation and mitigation against climate-related risks; contributing to decarbonising transport and achieving the targets of the Government's Climate Action Plan; addressing any trade and international connectivity needs; and supporting the development of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) projects.

The modification of this policy serves as a complement to the Government's view that port infrastructure projects that can demonstrate stable and strong cash-flows are attractive propositions for private-sector investors and lenders in the medium to long term. Mechanisms already exist for this type of investment within the context of a landlord port model, but consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis for investment in future port expansion through the possible sale of equity stakes, public-private partnership-type arrangements, build-operate-transfer arrangements, or other similar proposals. In addition, designated ports under the TEN-T regulations may avail of funding from the Connecting

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Europe Facility (CEF). The Department will continue to support ports in securing such funding and seek to maximise the potential for ports to access any other relevant sources of EU funding.

Funding must be compliant with EU State Aid rules which are set up under the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (TFEU), in Articles 107 and 108. The policy also recognises that Regulation (EU) 651/2014 as amended, also known as the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) provides for aid to seaports.

While there are no proposals for the Department to directly fund State-owned commercial port companies, the Department and Government will advocate for funding opportunities at EU level for the ports sector in light of the variety of demands placed upon it, across all relevant domains such as transport, energy, industrial policy and innovation/digitalisation. The Department and Government will also continue to advocate for appropriate updates to the State Aid framework in support of the development of our seaports through instruments such as the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) and the Transport Block Exemption Regulation (TBER).

State-owned commercial port companies must continue to make their own investments and remain financially self-sufficient without Government funding: with those that make early investments likely benefitting as 'first movers'. State-owned commercial port companies may still be able to avail of EU funding and cross-governmental funding facilities should they become available in the future.

Policy Objective 3:

The Government retains the option to invest in the capital infrastructure of Ports of National Significance, in tandem with the ports' business plans. Consideration may be given to the potential to access cross-governmental Exchequer funding and/or borrowing streams where such funding would have a clear link to Government policy and, where required, comply with European Union State Aid rules (with reference to Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)). This policy also recognises that Regulation (EU)

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651/2014 as amended, also known as the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) provides for aid to ports.

3.6 Inward Investment Screening Regime for Foreign Direct Investment in Critical Infrastructure

National Ports Policy notes that the *Screening of Third Country Transactions Act 2023*, which gives further effect to the *EU Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Regulation (EU) 2019/452* empowers the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment to assess, investigate, authorise, condition, or prohibit foreign investments based on a range of security and public order criteria. It also notes that an inward investment screening regime exists under the Act, applicable where "decisive influence or 25% or more of voting rights/shares are acquired".

The Department shall take part, as required under the 2023 Act, in a Screening Advisory Panel (SAP) to provide the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment with advice and information in relation to notifiable transactions related to ports.

Policy Objective 4:

State-owned commercial port companies and the relevant parties to a notifiable transaction shall ensure compliance with the requirements of the Screening of Third Country Transactions Act 2023.

3.7 Port Company Pensions

As was common in the broader State commercial sector, the port companies traditionally offered their employees membership of defined benefit pension schemes. Today, all State-owned commercial port companies have closed their defined benefit schemes to new members and have set up defined contribution (DC) schemes for all new employees.

Funded pension schemes are required to comply, *inter alia*, with minimum funding standards set out in the *Pensions Act 1990*, as amended. If the assets of a scheme's fund

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are judged by the scheme's actuary to be insufficient to meet the funding standard, the Act provides that a funding proposal to meet the deficit must be prepared and forwarded to the Pensions Authority. In the past, a number of ports submitted funding proposals, which were approved by the Pensions Authority.

In preparing the funding proposal regard should be given to the Guidance Note issued by the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation on 27 June 2014 (*Circular 12/2014 – Assessment of Pension Scheme Funding Proposals*). The draft funding proposal should, prior to final agreement between the port company board and the scheme trustees, be submitted for the approval of the Department, given with the agreement of the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation. Only following this approval should the funding proposal be forwarded to the Pensions Authority for approval.

All new port company pension schemes require the approval of the Minister for Transport, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation. Additionally, any proposed changes to existing statutory pension schemes or requests for Ministerial consent to discretionary benefits required under scheme rules and/or relevant legislation must be submitted for approval to the Department and subsequently to the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation well in advance of any decisions to implement changes.

The Institutions for Occupational Retirement Provision (IORP) relates to the operation, governance and supervision of company-sponsored pension schemes across Europe. It was introduced by the EU Commission in 2003 (Directive (EU) 2003/41). The *IORP II (Directive (EU) 2016/2341)* followed at the EU level in 2016 and was transposed into Irish Law in 2021. The end of January 2022 signalled the first deadline for pension scheme trustees for the preparation of an Annual Compliance Statement with further compliance deadlines in July 2022. All Irish Pension Schemes must be fully compliant by 31 December 2022. In advance of this date, the Pensions Authority issued an information note for

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trustees and a final Code of Practice. Compliance with the IORP II Directive is expected to lead to better governance, internal controls, risk management, improved member communication and increased supervision from the Pensions Authority.

Master Trusts are large pension schemes that are participated in by several employers but are governed by one set of trustees. On 2 June 2022, the Pensions Authority issued an information update for Master Trusts in advance of the 1 July 2022 compliance deadline. The implementation of IORP II has led to consideration, by many State bodies, of a move to a Master Trust arrangement for their DC pension schemes – this is especially true in the case of smaller schemes where the increased cost of meeting IORP II requirements may be significant.

The transition to Master Trust pension schemes by port companies, which can facilitate notable financial benefits, requires Ministerial consent to ensure that the statutory requirements of Ministerial oversight are met. The Department is to work with the Department for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation to ensure that the requisite Ministerial consent process is concluded in as timely a fashion as possible.

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4 Ports Policy and the Development of Maritime Transport

4.1 Introduction

The sustainable development of the port sector depends, to a large extent, on the relationship and interaction between the sector and the planning system. Ports act as international gateways, generate large volumes of traffic, and are key centres of economic activity. They are located at a unique interface between land and sea, in many cases in or near to major conurbations.

The majority of respondents to the public consultation for the *Review of 2013 National Ports Policy* (2023) expressed their preference in the short to medium term to maximise the infrastructure provision at existing ports, recognising the multiple complexities of planning for the development of green field site ports as additional or replacement infrastructure. The role of National Ports Policy is to establish a framework for setting out the likely requirements in the future, to highlight the strategic importance of providing for the continued development of the commercial port network particularly Ports of National Significance.

4.2 Future Capacity Requirements

The provision of adequate and efficient port capacity into the future is a crucial Government strategic objective. It is recognised that the planning, financing and development of large-scale infrastructure projects, such as major port capacity proposals, requires significant organisational, operational and financial resources. It is important that, in the State-owned commercial ports sector, bodies bringing forward significant port capacity developments have the resources required to ensure that the State's and the

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public's interest is protected and enhanced. Therefore, Government expects the Ports of National Significance to continue to lead the response of the State-owned commercial ports sector to future national port capacity requirements.

It is National Ports Policy's position that those ports considered to be of national significance must be capable of the type of port capacity required to ensure continued access to both regional and global markets for our trading economy.

In considering current operational needs and future ports capacity the Policy supports a transition to net zero carbon emissions in line with national Climate Action policy. The Ports of National Significance, as commercial semi-state (CSS) sector bodies, must be cognisant of the objectives of the New Economy and Recovery Authority's (NewERA's) Climate Action Framework which includes the formal adoption of the Government's emission reduction targets for the public sector: a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and a 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030.

4.2.1 Findings of the Irish Ports Capacity Study 2023

The *Irish Ports Capacity Study* (2023) confirms in its conclusion that Ireland has sufficient port capacity for all modes— RoRo, LoLo (Lift-On, Lift-Off container trade), Dry Bulk, Break Bulk, and Liquid Bulk—until approximately 2040. The Study notes - "*If the planned developments are put in place in time, then the capacity will be sufficient to meet the forecasted demand in the highest growth scenario*" (Arup & EY, 2023). It must be stressed that failure to proceed with investment in capacity, infrastructure, equipment and hinterland connectivity poses serious risks to the future success of Ireland's ports and the national economy.

In light of the importance of planning for future capacity, the Department intends to instigate a more formalised approach toward capacity forecasting, with the support of the IMDO, through commissioning independent analyses every five years.

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Policy Objective 5:

The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) shall lead on and support the Department of Transport in future capacity forecasting analyses ensuring that throughput baseline datasets are up to date to inform future capacity needs.

4.2.2 Roadmap for Future Capacity - post-2040 ports capacity assessment

The *Irish Ports Capacity Study* (2023) established the capacity capabilities of each port to 2040 but did not make any recommendations as to how future capacity should be developed within the ports or within the ports network post-2040.

In 2024, the Department commissioned the IMDO to conduct a review of demand and capacity requirements of the State's commercial ports as identified in the *Irish Ports Capacity Study* (2023) with a view to developing a roadmap for future growth to cater for post-2040 national ports capacity needs.

The report, '*Ireland's Port Network: A Roadmap for Post-2040 Development*', was delivered to the Department in 2025. A wide-ranging consultation was undertaken by IMDO with stakeholders across the maritime sector. Consideration was also made of projected trade figures, population growth and national policy, in particular the *National Development Plan* (NDP).

The IMDO concluded that, should the economy develop on its current trajectory, and notwithstanding current ambitions as set out in existing port master plans, providing adequate capacity through the current ports' network would be extremely challenging towards the latter half of the century, noting Dublin Port's projected post-2040 development constraints. Consequently, it is clear that additional port capacity, equivalent to a new port, will be required on the east coast of the country post 2040.

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It was also noted that current development proposals to expand the capacity of commercial State ports, as per current masterplans, will not account for all the additional growth in trade that is expected to be deflected from Dublin Port when it reaches its projected capacity limits in 2040. It is therefore important that any proposal for new port development is expedited to ensure that national port capacity continues to meet demand.

Any strategic infrastructure development would also have to align with existing Government policies including the National Planning Framework's (First Revision) objective for the development of commercial State ports to "*ensure the effective growth and sustainable development of the city regions*", the National Development Plan's goal of "*ensuring balanced regional development*", and the Programme for Government's objective of working with ports "*to support investments to facilitate offshore renewable energy development including constructing, maintaining and servicing renewable infrastructure, with a regionally balanced approach*".

4.2.3 Post-2040 port capacity recommendations

An incremental approach is required to address the Dublin Port post-2040 capacity timeline, including the renewed focus by all commercial State ports on maximizing the utilisation of existing port assets, as well as planning for the continued growth of all commercial State ports' assets. This will require revised master planning in order, not only to drive regional growth and to support development of offshore renewable energy developments, as mandated by the *National Planning Framework First Revision* (2025), but also to seek to capture the additional growth in post-2040 trade, particularly on the east coast.

The Department will utilise the planned national port performance measurement system, as per Policy Objective 5, in order to assess the effectiveness of the utilisation of ports' assets over time, both for existing and new infrastructure. The consideration of

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performance of the ports will form part of the governance and oversight of the State-owned commercial port companies. The performance measurement system will be cognisant of the characteristics of each port and will be developed and implemented in conjunction with the IMDO and the State-owned commercial ports.

Policy Objective 6:

The strategic development needs of port infrastructure to ensure port capacity for Ireland post-2040 and until the end of the century shall be enacted on a phased basis. The immediate focus of the commercial State port network shall be the maximisation of utilisation and expansion of the port companies' assets. The port network shall also require master planning for significant additional port capacity post-2040 on the east coast of the country.

Each of Ireland's State-owned commercial port companies shall review their respective masterplans to ensure they are consistent with the policy framework of the revised National Ports Policy. All masterplans will be subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements.

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4.3 Location of Dublin Port

Significant investment has occurred to transform Dublin Port into a state-of-the-art facility that handles more than 50% of all goods (in volume) entering and leaving the State. As with all other developments in the State-owned commercial port companies around the country, the transformation in Dublin Port is a tribute to the foresight and dynamism of the current and previous governments. Over the last two decades, however, there has been some debate and public discourse regarding the location of Dublin Port. Continual globalisation based on trade liberalisation and increasing cargo transport has resulted in a significant increase in pressures on port infrastructure and city resources. It has been argued that the need to address these growing pressures makes it imperative to examine a possible relocation of the whole of Dublin Port to a new location. The point is made that

such relocation has already been achieved in other European port cities such as Helsinki, Oslo and Copenhagen. However, while there are examples such as Helsinki, it is also the case that many of Europe's busiest container ports are immediately adjacent to the cities they service.

In the *Review of 2013 National Ports Policy* (2023) stakeholders were asked *'Is there a compelling case to examine the current location of Dublin Port*'? Of the 79 responses to this question five suggested there was a compelling case to examine the current location of Dublin Port. All five respondents who favoured an examination attached significant caveats including that any consideration of the relocation of Dublin Port would need to be objectively based and determined by reference to a range of criteria.

As is evidenced by the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the IMDO on post-2024 capacity, a simultaneous relocation of Dublin Port, and all of the land-based infrastructure that serves the port, along with the significant expansion of national port capacity required to facilitate trade post-2040 would be both implausible and impractical.

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4.4 Cruise Tourism Capacity

The global cruise market was valued at US $7.25 billion in 2021. Europe was the second-largest region in terms of revenue share, accounting for over 25% of the total (Grand View Research, 2020). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the market experienced a well-documented collapse in passenger numbers. However, the sector is expected to expand again from 2022 to 2028 owing to the resumed activities and relaxation of restrictions. In Ireland, the cruise liner industry is estimated to contribute €70m to the national economy and on average €14m per year to local economies surrounding ports such as Cork.

The growth of the cruise sector globally has also raised increasing concerns regarding the environmental pollution caused by ocean cruising. Cruise passengers and crews generate

a significant amount of waste and pollutants. According to a recent study published in *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, a large cruise ship can have a carbon footprint greater than 12,000 cars (Lloret, 2022). The expected growth of cruise tourism, its environmental impact, in addition to the cruise capacity constraints now being experienced at Dublin Port raises several questions for how Irish ports handle the capacity required for cruise into the future.

Several submissions to the *Review of National Ports Policy 2013 Issues Paper* (2023) expressed the view that more evidence is required to establish the level of demand for cruise berth capacity at Irish ports before considering policy action to address such demand. The importance of balancing the potential economic benefits of increased cruise tourism with sustainability and the well-being of local communities was also stressed.

Policy Objective 7:

The Department of Transport shall conduct an assessment of the environmental and port-related economic impact of cruise ships operating in Irish waters, in consultation with relevant stakeholders including the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, which has responsibility for tourism policy in Ireland.

4.5 Irish Maritime Development Office

4.5.1 Role of the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO)

The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) is Ireland's national dedicated development, promotional and marketing office for the shipping and shipping services sector. The IMDO provides the Minister for Transport and the maritime shipping industry with a range of information and reporting across the sector and works with international maritime transport businesses to help them set-up or expand in Ireland. It is also Ireland's designated Shortsea Shipping Agency and provides independent advice and guidance on EU funding initiatives.

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The IMDO was established as part of the Marine Institute, under an amendment to the *Marine Institute Act 1991*. While the statutory objectives of the IMDO are to directly service the functions of the Minister for Transport, for legacy reasons it remains under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and receives its current funding through that department.

The IMDO commenced operations in July 2000. After subsequent amendment in the *Harbours (Amendment) Act 2009* its legislative mandate includes the following functions:

- *To promote and assist the development of Irish shipping and Irish shipping services and seafarer training.*
- *To liaise with, support and market the shipping and shipping services*[2] *sector.*
- *To advise the Minister for Transport on the development and co-ordination of policy in the shipping and shipping services sector so as to protect and create employment.*
- *To carry out policy as may be specified by the Minister for Transport relating to the shipping and shipping services sector and seafarer training.*
- *To advise the Minister for Transport on the development and co-ordination of policy and to carry out policy, as may be specified by that Minister, relating to ports and the ports services sector, and;*
- *any additional functions relating to the shipping and shipping services sector conferred on the Institute under section 4(4) of this Act.*

4.5.2 Context for examining the role of the IMDO

Given Ireland's traditional dependence on maritime trade, as an island natation at the periphery of the European Union, and, having regard to the future complexities to come

[2] Shipping services are defined as: sea routes, ship management, technical management, commercial management, crew management, ship finance and mortgages, marine insurance, maritime legal services, shipbroking and ship chartering

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in the maritime transport sector, it is imperative that the IMDO can best serve the Minister and the Department of Transport. It is the case that the Minister and Department will be best served if the IMDO's legacy governance structure is updated and reformulated into a standalone organisation with a direct reporting line and oversight by the Department of Transport.

Policy Objective 8:

The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) shall be established as a stand-alone State agency under the aegis of the Department of Transport with the resources to both continue its current remit and expand into areas such as innovation, port sector and logistics skills and the promotion of the maritime sector, to better prepare the sector for the future and to protect our maritime economy, which is of critical importance to the State.

4.6 Port Marine Code

The overall maritime regulatory framework for ports has developed over many years with many different obligations in areas such as provision of port reception facilities and port security, amongst others. Additionally, there have been a number of incidents in ports where safety issues have been identified. Given the multitude of regulatory requirements and its growing complexity, it is now proposed to develop a port marine code which would bring all of these marine regulatory obligations into a single document, which would reference existing statutory requirements and provide guidance on their implementation.

Such a code could also address several wider safety issues and make recommendations based on national or international standards for the guidance of ports. The Code would not itself be mandatory but would serve as a roadmap for the enhancement of governance, safety and compliance of ports with the increasing need for ports to develop and provide assurance to their stakeholders. The Code would also have regard to best practice examples of similar codes and guidance published by other countries.

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All submissions to the *Review of National Ports Policy 2013 Issues Paper* (2023) that referenced the possibility of a Port Marine Code agreed that the adoption of a port marine code would align with the goal of more safe, efficient, and recognised marine operations. Several of these submitters expressed the view that a port marine code would assist ports in controlling their operational safety risks and minimising the possibility of incidents.

Policy Objective 9:

The Department of Transport shall develop an Irish Port Marine Code, which shall consider best practice examples of similar codes and guidance published by other counties. As part of the development of the Code, the Department shall implement a communications strategy to disseminate key safety messages to relevant stakeholders. The Code shall be developed on an administrative basis (i.e. it will not have a legislative basis) and shall be subject to revisions in the future.

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4.7 Pilotage

Marine pilots with local knowledge have been vital in guiding ships safely into and out of Ireland's ports and harbours for centuries. This need was formally recognised by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1968 through a non-binding resolution recommending the organization of pilotage services. Operational challenges such as boarding ships in bad weather or large vessels are addressed in the IMO's *International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea* (SOLAS Convention) and associated IMO resolutions, but these apply only to commercial ships under the convention's scope.

Pilotage in Ireland is governed by the *Harbours Act 1996*, as amended, which devolves responsibilities to the ports, making them the pilotage authorities. The Harbours Act provides for pilots to be either employees of the port company or to be licensed pilots. Licensed pilots are those not directly employed by the port company. As licensed pilots are not directly employed by the port company they may operate as self-employed contractors. Given the importance of the role of pilots, in terms of port operations and

safety, and notwithstanding the autonomy of the State-owned commercial port companies, it is National Ports Policy preference that all pilots operating in these ports would be employed as port company employees. In this manner, pilots would be fully integrated into port operations and would benefit in terms of certainty of training opportunities among others. As of 2025, it is noted that of the four State-owned commercial ports that require pilots, three operate as direct employers of their respective pilots.

Policy Objective 10:

The Harbours Act 1996, as amended, shall be further amended to allow for flexibility in terms of the provision of pilotage, noting a policy preference for pilots to be employees of the port company in which they operate.

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5 Future Sustainability

5.1 Introduction

As identified in *National Ports Policy 2013*, ports operate in a unique environment, located at the interface of land and water. All Irish ports are in estuaries or coastal zones, which are recognised as "*amongst the most dynamic and complex ecosystems in the world*" (Commission of the European Communities, 2011).

Environmental legislation in recent years has sought to strengthen the protection of such ecosystems. Development within such sensitive areas is subject to stringent oversight at both a national and European level. At the time of writing of the 2013 policy, ports were subject to the provisions under the Foreshore Acts in terms of consents for certain activities along with the requirement to comply with the provisions of the Planning and Developments Acts. The regime for maritime area consents has been overhauled significantly in recent years.

5.2 The new Maritime Planning system

The *Maritime Area Planning Acts 2021*, as amended, established a new planning system for Ireland's maritime area, underpinned by a statutory *Marine Planning Policy Statement* (2024), which is guided by the *National Marine Planning Framework* (2021).

The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) is a new State agency that was established in 2023. MARA's functions are set out in the *Maritime Area Planning Acts 2021*, as amended, and it has a key role to play in the new streamlined consenting system for the maritime area. Among its functions will be assessing Maritime Area Consent (MAC) applications for the maritime area, which are required by developers including ports and offshore renewable energy developers before permission for developments can be granted. MARA will also continue to manage the existing foreshore consent portfolio.

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The new marine planning system consists of a licensing and development management regime from the high-water mark to the outer limit of the State's continental shelf, administered by MARA, An Coimisiún Pleanála, and the coastal planning authorities.

5.3 Decarbonising the maritime transport sector

Ireland is an active participant in multilateral efforts to decarbonise the maritime transport sector through the negotiation and securing of regional measures in the EU and worldwide agreements at the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Ireland plays an important role in shaping global strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from shipping. By advocating for ambitious environmental standards and supporting research into low-carbon technologies, Ireland contributes significantly to the collective global endeavour to transition the hard-to-abate maritime sector to a more sustainable and resilient future. This advocacy will continue and grow in order to support our port and shipping stakeholders in the necessary fuel transition that the maritime sector will need to undertake to achieve long-term sustainability, meet international emissions targets, and remain competitive in a rapidly evolving global market.

5.4 Alternative Fuels

Fuel accounts for a substantial portion of overall ship operating costs. Transitioning to cleaner fuels will be challenging in the short term both logistically and financially. Compliance with the maritime aspects of the EU's "Fit for 55 Package" as well as the IMO's revised 2023 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Strategy will require shipping to replace fossil fuels with alternatives that do not emit greenhouse gases (GHGs) across their entire life cycle ('from well-to-wake').

At present, the adoption of and transition to alternative fuels by the shipping sector is still in its early stages. As recently as 2022 a total of 98.8 per cent of the global shipping fleet, in terms of number of vessels, was using conventional fuels. Only 1.2 per cent of the fleet was using alternative fuels, mainly liquified natural gas (LNG), and to a lesser extent,

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battery/hybrid, liquified petroleum gas (LPG), and methanol, according to a 2023 report by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

However, the situation is changing rapidly. At the start of 2024, around 50 per cent of the gross tonnage of vessels on order globally was designed to use alternative fuels, and over 14 per cent was classified as 'alternative fuel-ready'. In terms of tonnage, Clarkson Research's Green Technology Tracker estimates that 7% of fleet capacity 'on the water` in 2024 will be alternative fuel capable and that will rise to 20% by 2030.

Among the wide range of alternative fuel options available to the shipping industry, renewable e-fuels offer medium and long-term alternatives that have the potential to enter the market relatively quickly with e-ammonia, e-hydrogen, e-diesel, e-methane and e-methanol expected to see the largest uptake by the shipping industry. Electrification can also bring benefits to the sector in relation to reducing emissions and energy consumption, particularly for short distance voyages[3], while Wind Assisted Propulsion Systems (WASPs) can be considered to have the potential to reduce fuel consumption as well as GHGs and other emissions[4].

Each alternative energy fuel varies in terms of benefits and challenges to its adoption and operational use, with fuel choices depending on multiple factors including the supply chain, distance of route, engine technology, as well as environmental impacts and costs. Ultimately, there is currently no 'one size fits all' solution for the shipping industry with regard to the 'fuel of the future', and it is likely that a number of different low carbon fuel solutions will be utilised by the industry.

Widespread adoption of alternative fuels for shipping will require significant changes to current fuel production and distribution value chains. This will involve meaningful collaboration between stakeholders from within the shipping industry as well as those

[3] Guidance on the Safety of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) on board ships, EMSA 2023
[4] Potential of Wind-Assisted Propulsion for Shipping, EMSA 2023

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outside, including the energy and finance sectors. It also requires policy and regulations (such as those seen at the EU and IMO) to stimulate demand for these fuels as well as the provision of the necessary supporting infrastructure. Ports will be required to play a major role in the energy transition by providing the required facilities for the safe bunkering and storage of various alternative fuel options.

Some of the barriers currently delaying a speedy energy transition maritime transport sector include: fuel availability and costs; fuel technology maturation levels; technical feasibility; safety; bunkering infrastructure requirements; and onboard storage as well as implications for ship and engine design and crew skills and capabilities.

Ireland government, agencies and authorities will continue to guide, align and coordinate research and innovation investments in line with national, EU and international strategic priorities with due regard to the decarbonisation of the maritime transport sector, in order to address these barriers and provide guidance and support to our port and shipping stakeholders.

Ireland's government recognises that the energy transition is a global issue. The need to decarbonise is cross-sectoral. The transport sector is central to this transition and maritime is an important element. However, it should be noted that these transport sectors are competing for limited supply of fuels and energy sources and so cooperation along the value chain will be vital.

Policy Objective 11:

The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) shall lead on and support research on behalf of the Department of Transport into the feasibility of the development of alternative fuel infrastructure in State-owned commercial port companies.

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5.5 Green Shipping Corridors

Establishing Green Shipping Corridors, which are dedicated maritime routes where low- or zero-emission solutions are prioritised and encouraged, has significant potential to support global decarbonisation.

Ireland is a signatory to the 2021 *Clydebank Declaration for Green Shipping Corridors*, launched at the 26th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26). It is the collective aim of the signatories to the Clydebank Declaration to support the establishment of at least six green corridors, which are specific trade routes between major port hubs where zero-emission solutions are supported, by the middle of the 2020s. This is to be followed by the scaling up of activity in the following years by, inter alia, supporting the establishment of more routes, longer routes and/or having more ships on the same routes.

A joint funding call from Ireland's Marine Institute and the IMDO and the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK, was launched in April 2024. This will fund detailed and valuable feasibility studies on green shipping corridors focused on routes across the Irish Sea, between Ireland and the UK. The launch of the funding call represented the first step towards meeting the ambition outlined in the Clydebank Declaration.

A consortium including Stena Lines, Irish Ferries, Dublin Port Company and Maynooth University among others were the successful bidders. The group is conducting a study titled '*Greening the Irish Sea: The Central Corridor*' to examine the feasibility of green shipping lanes on the route between Dublin and Holyhead, which will include an analysis of fuel supply needs, consider the design of vessels, estimated capital and operational costs, and to identify barriers to the adoption of green corridors.

Irish ports will need to address the transition to alternative fuels by working with shipping companies and with their counterpart ports on established shipping routes and understanding how best to meet market demands. However, further research and innovation is required to identify agreed solutions in relation to infrastructure and fuel

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types and the optimal means of affecting the transition to a greener and more sustainable maritime industry.

By connecting ports and shipping companies committed to reducing their emissions, green shipping corridors can accelerate the transition to cleaner practices and catalyse the adoption of more sustainable shipping standards globally. Ireland will continue to engage with nearby coastal states to build on this work and support more research in the area of potential Green Shipping Corridors.

Policy Objective 12:

In line with the aims of the Clydebank Declaration for green shipping corridors as signed by Ireland at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, the Department of Transport shall support the establishment of a Green Shipping Corridor with the UK by 2030.

5.6 Onshore Power Supply

National and European legislation mandates that ports shall reduce greenhouse gas emissions and establish infrastructure to support alternative fuels and Onshore Power Supply (OPS) services. This is primarily driven by the *FuelEU maritime Regulation (EU) 2023/1805)* which enforces emissions reductions targets from ships starting in January 2025 and also requires larger vessels to connect to OPS while moored at the quayside in TEN-T ports from 2030. The *Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (EU) 2023/1804)* will also play a role in mandating the provision of this infrastructure in Irish ports.

OPS will play a critical role in decarbonising shipping in Ireland by enabling vessels to switch off their main engines and draw electricity from the grid while at berth, significantly reducing GHG emissions and air pollutants, which can be harmful to both human and ecosystem health, at ports. The adoption of OPS in Irish ports will require substantial investments in infrastructure, and ports will require access to adequate financing and

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funding mechanisms to support their transition. Securing these resources will be important to ensuring Ireland develops the necessary OPS facilities to reduce emissions and meet the necessary regulatory requirements, while supporting the broader transition to a greener and more sustainable maritime sector.

Policy Objective 13:

The Department of Transport shall support commercial State ports' applications for EU Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) energy funding for onshore power supply facilities by reviewing their applications and providing feedback before the ports submit their final application to the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA).

5.7 Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE)

Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2024 commits to achieving at least 5 gigawatts (GW) of installed offshore wind capacity by 2030. A further 2GW is earmarked for the production of green hydrogen and other non-grid uses. It also includes a suite of actions to realise Ireland's offshore renewable energy (ORE) potential.

Ireland has one of the best offshore wind resources in the world. Maximising offshore wind energy is a significant priority for Ireland's government, and the State has been accelerating policy in this area. To deliver our offshore wind energy ambitions, the government has implemented a plan-led approach, which is being overseen by a cross-Government Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce.

The Government's phased approach to offshore wind development involves:

- A developer-led Phase One, which corresponds to the first offshore renewable electricity auction (ORESS 1).
- Phase Two, an accelerated work programme, focusing on near-term delivery based on technology with proven scalability in other jurisdictions and which will procure the additional offshore wind capacity required to meet Government's 2030 target; and

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- A fully plan-led Future Framework.

The *South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan* (DMAP) was approved by the Oireachtas in October 2024, as Ireland's first spatial plan for the development of ORE. The Plan identified four Maritime Areas for sustainable future ORE developments over the next decade. A further National DMAP is being developed by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment.

Ports are critical strategic partners in enabling the greening of our energy supplies. By acting as facilitators for the development of offshore renewable energy (ORE), ports have a pivotal role in the evolution of more sustainable energy sources such as wind and green hydrogen. Ports must have the necessary infrastructure to allow them to grasp this opportunity.

A policy statement on the facilitation of Offshore Renewable Energy by ports was published in December 2021. This statement is restated as part of this revised National Ports Policy in the Annex to this document.

This restated policy statement asserts that Ireland will potentially need to build, on a phased basis, a number of port facilities that will act as construction, deployment and maintenance ports for ORE infrastructure. The National Ports Policy recognises that ports and/or entities within the ports will play a significant part in the provision of the required port infrastructure.

A multiport approach to the provision of port infrastructure to facilitate the development of ORE in Ireland will help maximise the economic benefits at regional as well as national level in terms of the creation of jobs and new Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) that can support the development of the ORE industry. This includes maximising the value that can be created from supply chain activities and by developing supply chain clusters in and around our ports.

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The Policy Statement also makes it clear to the offshore industry that the Government recognises the important role for ports in Ireland for the facilitation of ORE developments in line with the Policy Statement, a Ports Co-ordination Group has been established by the Department to co-ordinate and monitor the progress of the ports with their ORE projects.

5.8 Integrated Logistics

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of global supply chains. It highlighted the public health and economic implications of supply chain vulnerability (Lund, 2021). It is recognised that building new port capacity alone will not safeguard Ireland's growth unless the necessary hinterland connections are also in place.

It is noted that according to the analysis of *Demand for Rail Freight* (2024), as conducted by the IMDO on behalf of the Department, there are challenges to the further growth of rail freight in Ireland. The recent development of the motorway road network and the short distances travelled by goods from ports have kept demand for rail freight low. It is also accepted that rail freight may struggle for viability at shorter distances, with 300km being frequently cited as the minimum distance at which rail freight becomes competitive with road transport. Despite this, the IMDO's 2024 research noted support for rail freight among stakeholders consulted, most of whom, including those who expressed reservations about the feasibility and future for rail, cited rail service improvements and lower pricing as potential drivers of increased demand for rail freight.

The *All-Island Strategic Rail Review* (2024) has considered the rail network with regard to improving sustainable connectivity between the major cities, enhancing regional accessibility, supporting balanced regional development, and the potential role of rail freight. The Review also considered the potential scope for improved passenger and freight rail services along the various existing or future potential corridors of the network.

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National Ports Policy, cognisant of the proposed advancement of the rail network as envisaged in the *All-Island Rail Review*, supports the further development of rail connectivity as is required at our TEN-T core and comprehensive network ports.

The National Ports Policy also supports the further enhancement of rail connectivity to or in the vicinity of ports and also encourages ports with existing rail connections to consider how best to increase the utilisation of those connections.

Of the five Ports of National Significance, four currently have rail connectivity. The exception is Rosslare Europort. However, its masterplan outlines extensive infrastructure upgrades including the construction of new freight and passenger check-in areas to better accommodate rail freight movements. With regard to the other ports, each offers a strong foundation for the development of rail freight. In 2024 it was agreed between Irish Rail and Dublin Port Company that Irish Rail's Freight Depot at East Wall Road will be developed to enhance and expand capabilities for freight. The Port of Waterford offers excellent rail and road connections and is actively pursuing proposals to unlock further potential for rail freight services including for increased unitised trade. Work commenced on Phase 1 of the rehabilitation works on the Foynes (port) to Limerick freight line in 2023. Subject to funding allocation for the next phase and the commencement of works it is anticipated that the Foynes to Limerick route will open for freight services in 2026.

Policy Objective 14:

In line with the All-Island Rail Review (2024), the Department of Transport and ports shall support all actions and interventions designed to achieve the increases in rail freight as outlined in the review.

5.9 Circular Economy and Emerging Technologies

Given their business ecosystems, ports also have a role in developing the emerging circular economy and benefiting from the new logistics and industrial activities this could attract. Technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence (AI) would be expected to help

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ports to prepare for the move towards a circular economy by enabling ports to optimise processes and reduce waste. The encouragement of reuse in ports, for example by placing a focus on reusing and upgrading existing equipment rather than replacement where possible, could also be beneficial.

The digitalisation of ports will also play a crucial role in relation to the greening of port operations. The UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport (2023) highlights that "Energy-efficient technologies can deliver up to 15 per cent of the GHG emission savings required by 2050. Thus, in tandem with the fuel switch, technology should be leveraged for greater energy efficiency gains." There is huge potential for digitalisation to support the greening of both the ports and shipping sectors, and Ireland must recognise, encourage, and support strategic research and innovation in this area which could aid Ireland in meeting their EU and International climate obligations.

In September 2015, all 193 United Nations Member States adopted *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ("Transforming our World").* The 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. The focus of the 2030 Agenda is the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets. In accordance with commitments set out in the SDG National Implementation Plan 2022-2024, each chapter in the National Ports Policy has been assessed for SDG impact at SDG target level. In addition, each chapter references the SDGs and targets to which it is contributing.

Policy Objective 15:

The Department of Transport shall develop a maritime transport forum for sharing best practice in the emerging field of circular economy.

5.10 Sustainability and Natural Resources

Some 66% of ports interviewed as part of the Deloitte/ESPO *Europe's Ports at the Crossroads of Transitions* 2021 study considered sustainability to be the number one trend

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impacting their port. At the meeting point of sea and land, ports are on the frontline when it comes to experiencing the impacts of climate change. The expected rise in sea levels and increased incidence of extreme weather events directly impact the State's existing port infrastructure and how it should plan to protect and build its port network over the next 50 years. Climate adaptation planning and increased investment will be essential to enhance the resilience and continued operations of the port network.

Approximately 40% of all worldwide maritime flows consist of energy sources (coal, crude oil, oil products and others) (de Langen, 2020). As the nature of energy supply changes, ports will need to look for new ways to replace these cargos and associated revenue streams to maintain their viability. For example, in 2019 the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimated that tanker trade shipments (oil, gas and chemicals), accounted for 29% of total maritime trade volume, down from 55% nearly five decades earlier (UNCTAD, 2020). Changes in the future global fuel mix will be a very large driver for change in the ports and shipping sector. Ports are also important hubs for the Blue Economy (comprising all economic activities related to oceans, seas and coasts) and are critical strategic partners in enabling the greening of our energy supplies. By acting as facilitators for the development of offshore renewable energy (ORE), ports have a pivotal role in the evolution of more sustainable energy sources such as wind and green hydrogen. Ports must have the necessary infrastructure to allow them to grasp this opportunity.

In summary, the National Ports Policy supports the development of additional infrastructure and enhanced operations at Irish ports which do not pose a risk to the environment and human health and support the delivery of the actions prescribed in the Climate Action Plan to contribute to achieving the national climate targets.

5.11 Consideration of environmental impacts

Ports can have significant environmental impacts due to their locations and types of activities that take place in them, resulting in negative externalities such as air and water

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pollution. As such, ports must look with greater focus at their campus and move swiftly to the greening of port operations to place their sector onto a more sustainable footing.
Ports have a role to play in the protection of biodiversity given the sensitive areas in which they are located noting the Government's strategy in this area notably *Ireland's Fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan (2023-2030).* In terms of water quality, ports must give consideration of both mitigation and management of potential impacts during both operations and because of the expansion and development of infrastructure; particularly given the recent publication of the *Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland.* Also, ports have a role in ensuring air quality, for example both Dublin and Cork are designated Air Quality Zones, in terms of reducing sources of impacts on air quality and in facilitating low emission transport options via shipping and rail.

5.11.1 Biodiversity

As *Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030* makes clear, Ireland is home to globally important populations of birds, fish, mammals, invertebrates, plants and fungi across a wide range of terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats. The Department supports the delivery of this revised National Ports Policy in a manner that ensures alignment of the State-owned commercial port companies with the objectives of this action plan regarding the protection and conservation of biodiversity. The development of additional infrastructure and enhanced operations at Irish ports should include biodiversity protection aspects in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy given the sensitive areas within which these ports are located.

In this regard, it is noted that appropriate assessment, pursuant to Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive is integrated into the Irish Planning system, through which consent is sought for the development of ports. The purpose of appropriate assessment is to assess the implications of a plan or project against a site's conservation objectives, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. The conclusions should enable the competent authorities to ascertain whether the plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned. The focus of the appropriate assessment is therefore

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specifically on the species and/or the habitats for which the EU's 'Natura 2000' site is designated.

Competent authorities may only approve plans or projects for which the appropriate assessment could not rule out adverse effects on the integrity of the sites concerned by issuing a derogation under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive. These provisions set three key requirements that must be met and documented:

- the alternative put forward for approval is the least damaging for habitats, for species and for the integrity of the Natura 2000 site(s), regardless of economic considerations, and no other feasible alternative exists that would not adversely affect the integrity of the site;
- there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including 'those of a social or economic nature';
- all compensatory measures necessary to protect the overall coherence of Natura 2000 are taken.

Detailed information on the application of Article 6(4) can be found in the European Commission's '*Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive*' (2021).

5.11.2 Water Quality

Given the sensitive locality of ports - marine and estuarine waters are vulnerable receptors - National Ports Policy recognises the need for consideration of both mitigation and management of potential impacts during both operations and expansion in line with *Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland.*

5.11.3 Air Pollution

Port construction and operational activities can have adverse impacts on air quality. Reducing air pollutants from shipping is essential to improve air quality and reduce related

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health problems, especially for coastal and port populations, and also to protect the natural environment from disturbances such as acid rain.

In addressing air quality in relation to activities in the maritime area, impacts on relevant statutory air quality standards must be taken into account and mitigation measures adopted, if necessary, to allow an activity to proceed within these standards.

Ports will take due consideration of air quality, both in terms of reducing sources as well as facilitating low emission transport via rail and shipping. Ports will monitor air quality and implement the EU Clean Air for Europe Directive, the Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution, and the National Emissions Ceiling Directive.

5.11.4 Dredging

Dredging activities in Ireland, particularly in relation to port maintenance and development, are addressed within the framework of the *National Marine Planning Framework 2021* (NMPF). National Ports Policy supports the NMPF, recognizing the need for the environmental assessment and regulation of dredging operations, including relevant environmental assessments to ensure that dredging aligns with environmental protection standards and sustainable marine spatial planning.

5.12 Sea Level Rises, Coastal Change Management and Adaptation

Sea level rise can have several effects on ports in Ireland, impacting their operations, infrastructure, and surrounding communities as well as impacting infrastructure such as transport links to the ports' hinterland. Ports are also vulnerable to flooding due to their coastal locations. Rising sea levels mean that high tides and storm surges may more easily inundate port facilities, halting operations and leading to delays in shipping and logistics.

Higher sea levels may contribute to the corrosion and deterioration of port infrastructure, including docks, warehouses, and transportation links. Further saltwater intrusion can

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accelerate the degradation of materials, necessitating more frequent maintenance and replacement and related higher costs. Rising sea levels may also lead to environmental concerns around ports. Increased flooding can result in the release of pollutants from port facilities into the surrounding marine environment, affecting water quality and marine life.

Ports will need to invest in adaptation measures to mitigate the impacts of sea level rise. This could involve constructing sea walls, elevating critical infrastructure, and redesigning port layouts to be more resilient to flooding. These measures require significant financial investment and long-term planning. Addressing the impacts of sea level rise on ports in Ireland requires a combination of mitigation and adaptation strategies. Ports must invest in resilient infrastructure and operational practices to cope with rising sea levels and protect their critical role in the economy.

Addressing the impacts of sea level rise on ports in Ireland requires a combination of mitigation and adaptation strategies. Ports must invest in resilient infrastructure and operational practices to cope with rising sea levels and protect their critical role in the economy.

Ports should continue to future-proof the design levels of new port infrastructure to consider the impact of predicted increases in tidal levels because of climate change, such as by adding an allowance for sea level rise for climate change, freeboard to allow for uncertainty and additional increases for wave overtopping. Ports should also engage with the Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme offered by the Office of Public Works (OPW) to identify and map flood risks.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) is the lead department on the *National Coastal Change Management Strategy* (NCCMS). A scoping report jointly authored by the OPW on the development of the strategy was published in October 2023.

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The National Ports Policy recognises that through master planning all Ports of National Significance are fully cognisant of the impacts of coastal erosion and planning measures to protect existing infrastructure and ensure future developments are climate change-proofed to the greatest extent possible. It is envisaged that ports will contribute to the work of the National Coastal Change Management Strategy interdepartmental group on the continued development of the strategy and on implementation elements as required. For example, the group has plans to create inventories of existing and planned coastal defences.

Policy Objective 16:

The *Ports of National Significance shall develop Climate Adaptation Plans to address Coastal Change Management, to be updated at five-year intervals.*

5.13 Port Network Resilience

The closure of Holyhead Port on Saturday 7 December 2024, following Storm Darragh, highlighted the critical role the Welsh Port plays in facilitating trade and travel between Britain and Ireland and underscored the broader risks posed by disruptions at such key logistical hubs.

It is estimated that between 7,500 and 10,000 units of Roll-On, Roll-Off traffic travel between Dublin and Holyhead in a typical week in early December each year, with up to 100,000 people travelling on the route over the Christmas period.

While recent challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have demonstrated that Ireland's ferry services are adept in responding to unexpected market demands and conditions, it is evident that impacts and disruptions to destination ports, i.e. those outside of Ireland, may be as or even more impactful on the State's supply chain as a similar disruption to operations at an Irish port.

The Department will conduct a review of the infrastructure resilience of the Ports of National Significance both in terms of connectivity as well as capacity to negotiate extreme

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weather conditions in line with the recommendations of the Department's second *Transport Sectoral Adaptation Plan (T-SAP II).*

The rapid digital transformation of ports heightens the need for the prioritisation of organisational cyber resilience. Strengthening cyber defences is essential to protect the integrity and accessibility of vital data, maintain reliable service operations, and safeguard maritime infrastructure.

Policy Objective 17:

The Department of Transport, in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government (2025), shall support resilience testing, including cyber, on all ports and sea routes to ensure contingency plans are in place.

5.14 Port Security

Maritime security involves a combination of preventive measures to protect shipping and port facilities against internal and external threats of intentional unlawful acts.

On 31 March 2004, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted *Regulation (EC) No 725/2004 on enhancing ship and port facility security*. The maritime security measures imposed by that Regulation constitute only part of the measures necessary to achieve an adequate level of security throughout maritime-linked transport chains. That Regulation is limited in scope to security measures on board vessels and the immediate ship/port interface.

In October 2005, the European Parliament and Council of the European Union adopted *Directive 2005/65/EC on enhancing port security*. The scope of the Directive extends back from the Ship/Shore interface into the greater port area, with Members defining port boundaries, as any specified area of land and water in which the port is situated containing works and equipment designed to facilitate commercial maritime transport operations. Ports may be multi-facility or single-facility entities.

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The Department reviews and approves the Port/Port Facility Security Assessments and Plans that are required to be completed by the ports/port facilities for compliance with the EU Regulation and Directive on a five-year cycle. During the five-year period of approval validity, the Department carries out a programme of inspection/audit in ports and port facilities. The commercial state ports shall continue to work closely with An Garda Síochána (AGS) not only with respect to growing areas of EU-wide concern in port security, such as drugs smuggling, but also with respect to the preservation by AGS of access via public roads and rail to this critical infrastructure. In collaboration with AGS, the ports will undertake security assessment with a view to ensuring that they put in place emergency plans and contingency arrangements to anticipate and mitigate against any future blockades.

The Programme for Government (2025) recognises the increasing importance of maritime security given our significant and expanding sub-sea data cabling infrastructure and emerging offshore energy sector. It is a matter for the port authorities to maximise the security of their port infrastructure. Ports also have a role in general maritime security, contributing to information-sharing, risk assessment, and law enforcement. In this regard, the National Ports Policy supports the Department of Defence's National Maritime Security Strategy and the revised EU maritime security strategy. The Department engaged with the Department of Defence in the development of the National Maritime Security Strategy, which contains the following action for the Department of Transport: - to support increased security and resilience of Ports of National Significance in line with EU Directive 2005/65/EU, EU Regulation 725/2004 and Critical Entities Resilience (CER) and Network and Information Security (NIS2) directives.

5.15 Gender balance and diversity

Achieving gender balance and diversity in ports is crucial for driving innovation, enhancing decision-making, and boosting overall performance. The port industry has traditionally been male dominated, but recent initiatives are starting to change this landscape.

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Gender balance in ports means having an equitable representation of men and women at all levels. Management consultancy research indicates that companies with greater gender diversity tend to perform better financially and are more innovative. In the context of ports, this can lead to more effective problem-solving and increased operational efficiency.

Diversity encompasses more than just gender; it includes various attributes such as race, ethnicity, age, and cultural background. A diverse workforce is better equipped to understand and meet the needs of a global customer base, fostering stronger international relationships and enhancing the industry's ability to adapt to changing market conditions.

Efforts to promote gender balance and diversity in ports are underway. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA) are active in promoting gender diversity. Their Women in Maritime survey provides insights into the current state of gender diversity in the sector and sets benchmarks for progress. The survey revealed that women constitute only 29% of the maritime workforce, highlighting the need for further improvement.

In the UK, the British Ports Association (BPA) conducted a survey in 2021 to evaluate gender diversity within ports. The survey found that women made up 17% of the workforce in respondent ports, with women earning 93p for every £1 earned by men. This data helps ports identify areas for improvement.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. Gender stereotypes and cultural biases can impede women's progress in the industry. Additionally, the demanding nature of port jobs, which often require long periods away from home, can be a barrier for many women. Overcoming these challenges requires a collective effort from port authorities, industry associations, and governments. By embracing gender balance and diversity, ports can unlock new opportunities for growth and innovation, ensuring their sustainability and competitiveness in the global market.

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In developing the Gender and Diversity Equality Action Plans, the State-owned commercial port companies shall consider the Programme for Government (2025), which sets out key actions which should be incorporated into the Action Plans.

Policy Objective 18:

State-owned commercial port companies shall develop and implement a Gender and Diversity Equality Action Plan.

5.16 Inclusion and accessibility

It is essential that transport is accessible to all. The concept and practice of Universal Design (UD), which considers persons of different ages, ability, or mobility can realise this. The Department, using an integrated universal design approach, will continue to progressively make our transport systems accessible for persons with disabilities, persons with reduced mobility and older people.

Furthermore, the Department is committed to meeting obligations under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) to consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities in the development of its policies.

For maritime transport, as outlined in the Department's 2010 *Guidelines for Accessible Maritime Passenger Transport*, ports are recommended to:

- Put in place plans to improve the accessibility of their infrastructure and buildings. These plans should be shared with persons with reduced mobility.
- Consult with and, where relevant, work in partnership with other agencies, such as local authorities, in improving the overall accessibility of the maritime transport infrastructure and built environment.

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- When developing or refurbishing buildings and terminals, ensure that they are fully accessible to all persons with reduced mobility, in line with the National Disability Authority's *Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach*.
- Ensure that periodic accessibility audits of the infrastructure and build environment are conducted by trained and experienced auditors. Feedback from persons with reduced mobility will be an essential input for the auditor.

Since 18 December 2012, there has been a legal requirement that assistance be available free of charge to persons with a disability and persons with reduced mobility in ports, and, if possible, that it be adapted to the needs of the individual.

Respondents to the Issues Paper on the Review of the National Ports Policy on the question of improved accessibility highlighted the ongoing need for ports to work in partnership with all relevant agencies most especially the local authorities in delivering the correct infrastructure.

The rights of persons with reduced mobility in transport are upheld and supported through various regulations at EU level. The Department recognises the importance of ensuring that such regulations, such as *Regulation (EU) No 1177/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 concerning the rights of passengers when travelling by sea and inland waterway* are fit for purpose.

Policy Objective 19:

The Department of Transport shall assist the National Transport Authority (NTA) and the relevant ports in the implementation of the requirements of the EU Accessibility Directive.

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6 Appendix: Actions and Timelines

Action #	NPP Section Ref.	Policy Objective	Implementation Timeline
1 (a)	2.4	*The Department of Transport shall consider modernising the ownership structure and legislation governing the status of Rosslare Europort.*	2026 – 2027
1 (b)	2.4	*The Department of Transport shall consider whether consolidation in the State-owned commercial port network would unlock additional competitive and investment opportunities.*	2028
2	3.1	*The Department of Transport, in consultation with the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) and the State-owned commercial port companies, shall introduce a national port performance measurement system to aid Government's evaluation of its shareholding in the State-owned commercial port companies*	2027
3	3.5	*The Government retains the option to invest in the capital infrastructure of Ports of National Significance, in tandem with the ports' business plans. Consideration may be given to the potential to access cross-governmental Exchequer funding and/or borrowing streams where such funding would have a clear link to Government policy and, where required, comply with European Union State Aid rules*	N/A

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		(with reference to Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)). This policy also recognises that Regulation (EU) 651/2014 as amended, also known as the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) provides for aid to ports.	
4	3.6	*Ports and the relevant parties to a notifiable transaction shall ensure compliance with the requirements of the Screening of Third Country Transactions Act (2023).*	N/A
5	4.2.1	*The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) shall lead on and support the Department in future capacity forecasting analyses ensuring that throughput baseline datasets are up to date to inform future capacity needs.*	2027– 2028
6	4.2.3	*The strategic development needs of port infrastructure to ensure port capacity for Ireland post-2040 and until the end of the century shall be enacted on a phased basis. The immediate focus of the commercial State port network shall be the maximisation of utilisation and expansion of the port companies' assets. The port network shall also require master planning for significant additional port capacity post-2040-on the east coast of the country.* *Each of Ireland's State-owned commercial port companies shall review their respective masterplans to ensure they are consistent with the policy framework of the revised National Ports Policy. All*	Ongoing 2027– 2028

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		masterplans will be subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements.	
7	4.4	*The Department of Transport shall conduct an assessment of the environmental and port-related economic impact of cruise ships operating in Irish waters, in consultation with relevant stakeholders including the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, which has responsibility for tourism policy in Ireland.*	2027
8	4.5.2	*The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) shall be established as a stand-alone State agency under the aegis of the Department of Transport with the resources to both continue its current remit and expand into areas such as innovation, port sector and logistics skills and the promotion of the maritime sector, to better prepare the sector for the future and to protect our maritime economy, which is of critical importance to the State.*	2027– 2032
9	4.6	*The Department of Transport shall develop an Irish Port Marine Code, which shall consider best practice examples of similar codes and guidance published by other counties. As part of the development of the Code, the Department shall implement a communications strategy to disseminate key safety messages to relevant stakeholders. The Code shall be developed on an administrative basis (i.e. it will not have a legislative basis) and shall be subject to revisions in the future.*	2027– 2032

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10	4.7	*The Harbours Act 1996, as amended, shall be further amended to allow for flexibility in terms of the provision of pilotage, noting a policy preference for pilots to be employees of the port company in which they operate.*	2027– 2032
11	5.4	*The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) shall lead on and support research on behalf of the Department of Transport into the feasibility of the development of alternative fuel infrastructure in Irish commercial State ports.*	Ongoing
12	5.5	*In line with the aims of the Clydebank Declaration for green shipping corridors as signed by Ireland at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, the Department shall support the establishment of a Green Shipping Corridor with the UK by 2030.*	2030
13	5.6	*The Department of Transport shall support commercial State ports' applications for EU Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) energy funding for onshore power supply facilities by reviewing their applications and providing feedback before the ports submit their final application to the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA).*	Ongoing
14	5.8	*In line with the All-Island Rail Review (2024), the Department of Transport and ports shall support all actions and interventions designed to achieve the increases in rail freight as outlined in the review.*	Ongoing

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15	5.9	*The Department of Transport shall develop a maritime transport forum for sharing best practice in the emerging field of circular economy.*	2027
16	5.12	The *Ports of National Significance shall develop Climate Adaptation Plans to address Coastal Change Management, to be updated at 5-year intervals.*	2028
17	5.13	*The Department of Transport, in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government (2025), shall support resilience testing, including cyber on all ports and sea routes to ensure contingency plans are in place.*	*2027*
18	5.15	*State-own commercial port companies shall develop and implement a Gender and Diversity Equality Action Plan.*	*2028*
19	5.16	*The Department of Transport shall assist the National Transport Authority (NTA) and the relevant ports in the implementation of the requirements of the EU Accessibility Directive.*	*Ongoing*

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7 Annex: Policy Statement on the Facilitation of Offshore Renewable Energy by Commercial Ports in Ireland – December 2021 (Restated)

Background and Context

To help meet the EU's goal of climate neutrality by 2050, the European Commission in November 2020 published the EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy[1]. The Strategy proposes increasing Europe's offshore wind capacity from its current level of 12 GW to at least 60 GW by 2030 and 300 GW by 2050. The Commission aims to complement this with 40 GW of ocean energy and other emerging technologies such as wave, tidal and floating solar by 2050. Under the Green Deal[2], the EU has raised its renewable targets to 40% by 2030 and sets legally binding targets to reduce net EU emissions by 55% by 2030, from 1990 levels, and eliminate them by 2050.

The Programme for Government (2020) (PfG) and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 commit Ireland to a 51 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030 and Zero emissions by 2050. The PfG set a target for 70% of electricity to be generated from renewable sources by 2030 and set a target of 5GW of offshore wind by 2030. The Climate Action Plan published on 4th November 2021 (CAP 21) has since increased the target to up to 80% renewable electricity by 2030. It also sets out how Ireland will take advantage of the potential of at least 30GW of floating offshore wind.

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1 https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/renewable-energy/eu-strategy-offshore-renewable-energy_en

2 https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/energy-and-green-deal_en

The National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) published earlier in 2021 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 including, port activity and Offshore Renewable Energy.

The Maritime Area Planning Bill 2021 has passed through all stages of the Oireachtas. This will provide the legal underpinning to an entirely new marine planning system, enabling the development of Ireland's substantial offshore wind potential.

Ports

As an Island nation, Ireland's commercial ports are our key international maritime gateways, with at least 90% of Ireland's trade by volume exported and imported by sea. National Ports Policy, the National Marine Planning Framework and the National Development Plan recognise the importance of ports in connecting Ireland to the rest of the world in terms of trade, transport and tourism and Ireland must be capable of delivering additional port capacity to meet that demand. The importance of maritime capacity and connectivity was highlighted during COVID-19 and Brexit.

While the primary function of our State ports is to facilitate maritime transport, our ports are more than trading gateways to the world. They are also enablers of other activities. The significant role that ports can play in facilitating the development of the Irish offshore renewable energy sector is widely recognised.

Assessment

Given Ireland's increased ambition in Offshore Renewable Energy and pending a review of overall National Ports Policy, the Department of Transport, in conjunction with the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO), conducted an assessment of the options for Irish State ports to facilitate the sector and assist in Ireland achieving its emission reduction targets.

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The assessment involved confidential engagement throughout 2021 with individual companies and stakeholders in the ORE sector to ascertain their needs and intentions and to facilitate further discussions with the Ports. Cross departmental engagement between the Departments of Transport, Environment, Climate and Communications has also been ongoing. In addition, engagement with other ports and administrations to establish best practice in this regard in Europe formed part of the assessment.

Policy Decision

Taking account of the conclusions and recommendations of that assessment, the Minister for Transport has decided that a multiport approach will be required to address the needs of the ORE industry. This approach is best suited to deliver the ORE targets set out in the PfG and the CAP 21 and to position Ireland to take advantage of the economic opportunity created by the roll out of both fixed and floating offshore wind in Irish waters. It is also in line with National Ports Policy 2013 which recognised the role that ports can play in servicing the offshore energy sector and the need for further port capacity in this area.

ORE developments will typically require both large-scale port infrastructure for project deployment and smaller-scale port facilities to provide ongoing operation and maintenance (O&M) services. Around the Irish coast, ORE projects will develop in several phases.

To meet Ireland's target of 5GW by 2030, it is clear that a minimum of two facilities will be required from

2025 onwards for deployment activity. A multiple of typically smaller ports will be needed for O&M operations.

Port location cannot be overlooked in the context of the roll-out of the ORE industry in Ireland. The location has operational advantages that reduce costs and delays and de-risk the construction phase of the ORE project.

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A multiport approach removes the risk of a single point of failure that could occur for financial, operational, environmental, or planning reasons. A multiport approach will ensure sufficient flexibility to deal with these uncertainties and that port capability can come on stream as required at a number of locations.

Phases 1 and 2

The objective of achieving 5 GW of installed offshore wind by 2030 will primarily be met through the deployment of fixed pile turbines off the East and South East coasts. This is because of more favourable sea areas with significant waters available at depths of under 60 meters, combined with the proximity to an existing relatively strong onshore transmission system. It is the intention that the 5 GW target will be facilitated through two phases of offshore wind deployment with two specific auctions to take place under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS), ORESS 1 and ORESS 2. A consultation to inform the approach to the second phase will include the option of including some floating offshore wind as a special category in ORESS 2.

Regarding the location of future offshore generation, the Shaping Our Electricity Report published by EirGrid in November 2021 identifies that almost the entirety of offshore generation required to meet the 5 GW objective would be connected to the onshore transmission system on the East and South coast, with the vast majority to be connected on the East and South East coasts.[3] The EirGrid report assumes that only around 400 MW will be connected on the west coast by 2030.

It is recognised that existing ports in Ireland, or entities within ports with development plans, e.g., Rosslare Europort, the Port of Cork, can play a significant role in providing the required largescale port infrastructure for those deployments. Drogheda Port is also proposing the development of large-scale infrastructure at a new east coast location which could also be an option for east coast deployments. Existing facilities at a port in Northern Ireland can also play a role in supporting these activities. There are opportunities for other east coast ports also for O&M services, e.g., Waterford. The ports at Wicklow and Arklow have already entered into arrangements with individual ORE project developers. There

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is one project included under Phase 1 off the West Coast offering an opportunity to ports in that area. However, the significant potential for ORE in the Atlantic is not envisaged until later in the decade.

The current structure of the State commercial ports sector is that of independent commercial entities, each required to further develop their commercial business. As private sector involvement in the provision of port infrastructure and services already occurs within some ports, it is considered appropriate that other terminal owners or operators within the port may provide the required infrastructure, working in collaboration with a port. It is also appropriate for port companies to bring private partners on board in developing these facilities.

The consultation process currently underway on the first Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS 1) signposts that in order to capture the maximum economic benefit of offshore wind for local communities, to deliver long-term, high value employment in these areas, and to ensure a level playing field between projects, it is proposed that operation and maintenance services for each project successful at ORESS 1 are required to be headquartered in either Ireland or Northern Ireland.

It is anticipated that a second auction, ORESS 2, will be held by 2025 to facilitate further deployments to underpin delivery of the 5GW target. This auction may also include a special category for floating offshore wind.

[3] Shaping our electricity future Roadmap (eirgridgroup.com)

Phase 3

Further offshore wind-specific auctions are planned later in the decade, for deployment post-2030, as part of an enduring, plan-led regime for offshore wind in Ireland. The Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan II will inform the identification of the optimal areas for renewable technologies through a comprehensive assessment of all available data and information. This will include identification of areas off the South West and West coasts which typically have deeper waters, and a less developed onshore

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transmission system than on the East coast. Floating turbines, where the turbines are anchored to the seabed rather than directly fixed, will provide the opportunity to develop the deeper waters in the South West and West coasts. The potential to generate green hydrogen from offshore wind will also provide an opportunity for development in these areas that is not fully electricity grid dependant.

This technology is currently at the early stages of commercialisation and is developing faster than initially anticipated. It is acknowledged that this is an area in which Ireland has a very significant deployment opportunity in the medium to long term.

In that context, it is recognised that ports, e.g., Shannon Foynes Port or Port of Cork, or entities within the ports, can also play a significant part in the provision of the required large scale port infrastructure. There will also be opportunities for other ports along the west coast (in addition to the project under Phase 1) such as the ports of Galway, Bantry Bay (under the Port of Cork), and the Fishery Harbour Centres of Ros an Mhíl, Killybegs and Castletownbere which are under the remit of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Funding options

Cognisant that Member States throughout Europe have a common goal in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through progressing ORE, the Department engaged extensively with other Member States and the Commission advocating for the inclusion of funding for ORE related port infrastructure under the Connecting Europe Funding facility (CEF) which is the funding instrument for the EU's Trans- European Transport Network (TEN-T).

The CEF criteria were extended to allow EU funding for conducting studies and for the development of ports capacities and facilities in relation to offshore wind farms in the next 2021-2023 funding window. This is significant and a clear recognition of the vital role that

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ports will play in achieving carbon reduction through wind energy and a sign that the EU is committed to supporting the development of ORE port infrastructure.

Successful eligible TEN-T applicants can obtain grant funding of up to 50% of eligible costs for studies and up to 30% of infrastructure works costs.

There will be three calls for applications in this period, and the Department of Transport is currently engaging with eligible TEN-T ports or eligible entities within TEN-T ports to assist, where appropriate, in applying for this funding. The potential applicants at this stage are applying for funding for studies which will either be looking at the feasibility of a largescale project or will effectively prepare them for lodgement of planning applications.

These studies may enable a number of entities to be in a position to proceed to planning from 2022 onwards and, if successful, commence construction from 2024 onwards. This timeline ties in with the first Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS 1) auction, which will take place towards the end of

2022, and first construction for projects successful at this auction is expected from 2025. Successful ORE development bidders will be better positioned to engage commercially with the port of their choosing, although it is encouraged that they engage with ports as early as possible to inform design criteria and to support the business case for investment in the port.

Additional financing opportunities may arise in the future through the European Investment Bank, the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund, Green Funds or other sources. However, any such investment will only be made on the basis of the commercial viability of the project.

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Other opportunities

The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications has commenced updating the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDP 1). The Department of Transport is represented on the ORDEP II steering group and subgroups. This work will inform the identification of candidate ORE areas for potential future designation under the Designated Marine Area Plan (DMAP) process as provided for in the Maritime Area Planning Bill.

Ireland has a sea area of 490,000 km2 that is approximately seven times its landmass. With one of the best offshore renewable energy resources globally, there is very significant potential in utilising these resources to generate carbon-free renewable electricity. The development of this vast resource can enable Ireland to enhance the security of energy supply by substituting imported fossil fuels with indigenous renewable resources and, potentially, by developing an export market in green energy, either through electricity export from interconnectors or from power to gas such as hydrogen generation. Greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced, while delivering growth to the economy and supporting regional development. There is also potential for wave and tidal renewable energy in the waters around Ireland and the potential for very large-scale green hydrogen and green ammonia projects. These are still very much pre-commercial technologies at this time.

A number of ports and private entities are already progressing plans to provide the facilities and infrastructure required to assist the ORE sector to develop in Ireland. This Policy Statement endorses that development.

The Department of Transport will establish a ports co-ordination Group to coordinate port responses and maintain policy alignment.

In addition, the CAP 21 states that a cross-departmental ORE Team, chaired by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, is being established to capture wider economic and business opportunities associated with the development of offshore

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renewables in Ireland. This will include the identification of supporting infrastructure development and supply chain opportunities as Ireland's ORE industry is developed.

Enterprise Ireland has already established an offshore wind cluster of Irish SMEs and have been targeting market opportunities particularly in the UK market, to prepare companies to meet supply chain demands for the roll-out of the sector in Ireland.

In conclusion, this policy clarifies a number of matters related to how Irish commercial ports will support the roll out of the ORE industry. The statement is attentive to existing National Ports Policy as well as EU and national ambitions to reduce carbon emissions. It also recognises the economic potential of the offshore renewable energy industry and the very significant gains that can be made by Irish ports and the national economy.

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