
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Consultation on the Development of a National Industrial Strategy for Offshore Wind

Response from the American Chamber of Commerce Ireland (AmCham) to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's public consultation.

November 2023

The American Chamber of Commerce Ireland

The Voice of US-Ireland Business

The American Chamber of Commerce Ireland (AmCham) is the collective voice of US companies in Ireland and the leading international business organisation supporting the Transatlantic business relationship. Our members are the Irish operations of all the major US companies in every sector present here, Irish companies with operations in the United States and organisations with close linkages to US-Ireland trade and investment.

AmCham recognises the challenges that Ireland faces in relation to renewable energy generation and availability. The production of indigenous renewable energy is crucial from a sustainability, a cost, and a security of supply perspective. The three are very much intertwined, and important if Ireland is to continue to attract foreign direct investment (FDI).

AmCham companies are committed to climate action. A recent survey of AmCham members found that 42% have committed to reaching carbon neutrality by 2030, with this rising to 64% aiming to reach this goal by 2040. Despite the numerous challenges businesses have faced in recent years, our members remain committed to achieving a more sustainable future.

MNCs in Ireland are determined to deliver on ambitious goals in diverse areas such as renewable energy, waste reduction, and carbon neutrality. AmCham members are focused on how best we can ensure that all sectors of the Irish economy adapt and contribute to meeting Ireland's climate action goals, including through consideration of our renewable energy policy, the adoption of pro-innovation pilot programmes across potential technologies, focusing on achieving net zero, and identifying opportunities to improve energy efficiencies. AmCham and our members closely engage with Government and State agencies to address the various requirements needed to ensure that Ireland meets its net zero ambitions.

AmCham continues to advocate for the acceleration of renewable energy development, namely Offshore Wind Energy (OWE), and welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on its National Industrial Strategy for Offshore Wind.

Ireland has the capacity, in the decades ahead, to become not only self-sufficient in terms of renewable energy production, but also to become a green energy exporter. Given Ireland's enormous potential when it comes to OWE, Government must now approach this opportunity with ambition and urgency to ensure that greater energy security, affordability, sustainability, and eventually exportability can be achieved.

Supply Chain

In its Climate Action Plan Government commits to *“the development of supply chain opportunities through appropriately designed and complementary energy and enterprise policies and measures of priority”*. AmCham acknowledges that action being taken by the Department to directly address the issue of supply chains within the OWE ecosystem.

In order for Ireland to reach its potential in terms of OWE generation, supply chain issues need to be addressed. There are several different considerations to be taken into account in terms of enhancing Ireland’s OWE supply chain. Given the global commitments to renewable energy in the medium-term there will be significant competition for project development resources, including capital, equipment and knowledge.

As is the case in many sectors, the OWE is facing a considerable skills shortage in a variety of roles from welders, metal machining, fitting and instrument making tradesmen, as well as production, design and QC engineers with sector-specific experience, and additionally economists, data scientists and accountants with specific experience in legislation, regulation and compliance.¹ Government must engage with schools, universities, and training bodies in a targeted manner to promote the opportunities available to those that develop the skills that will be essential in Ireland’s energy transition and green supply chain.

AmCham would further like to see the development of apprenticeship schemes to supplement the opportunities available in tertiary education for such career development. For instance, the development of an enhanced focus on training in the areas of energy conversion, storage and transport along with distributed renewable energy resources and grid management, would demonstrate that Ireland is committed to development of its renewable energy sector and encourage international investors to look towards Ireland as being ambitious and determined in its renewable energy targets.

Building Co-operation

AmCham has continuously stressed the importance of fostering greater collaboration between industry, research, and Government in order to make best use of the knowledge and opportunities that exist in the area of OWE in particular, and renewable energy in general. Cooperation between public, private and governmental agencies is required to work collectively towards a common energy goal.

AmCham welcomed the Department’s commitment to a “*strengthened national approach to clustering*”² in its White Paper on Enterprise 2022-2030, and notes the benefits that clustering could provide in the context of renewable energy development and innovation.

¹ Carbon Trust, Skill Net, Green Tech: <https://windenergyireland.com/images/files/final-harnessing-our-potential-report-may-2020.pdf>

² DETE, <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/white-paper-on-enterprise-2022-2030.pdf>

Formalised collaboration between industry, academia, and Government characterised by consistent engagement and concrete terms of reference could be particularly beneficial in the context of OWE. The establishment of the Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce was a positive action by Government in terms of approaching the issue on a cross departmental basis. A similar mechanism made up of industry and academia as well as departmental representatives is one way in which greater collaboration and information sharing can be further fostered.

Research, Development & Innovation (RD&I)

AmCham believes that Ireland should take an ambitious approach to its research and development goals. In this regard, AmCham supports the Department's suggestion of *"Ireland establishing an applied Centre of Excellence that can act as a globally recognised innovation centre in offshore wind"*. Ireland has the potential to be a global leader in research and to remain a hotbed of innovation, particularly in relation to OWE, and this potential can be fostered via the establishment of such centres of excellence.

Ireland can be a European champion for research if the correct steps are now taken. Developing Ireland's research space must be approached with ambition so that Ireland can become the destination of choice within the EU for US MNCs to place integral research functions, which in turn serves to support the wider OWE ecosystem.

Further, Ireland's ambitions in terms of renewable energy should not be curtailed by the limitations of technology of today. Rather, it is important Ireland's ambitions acknowledge the capabilities which will come on-stream in the years ahead as we progress on the journey to a carbon neutral, sustainable and greener economy.