

# Offshore wind plans off Waterford coast spark significant concerns

PLANS to plant towering turbines just off the Waterford coast have ignited fierce opposition among locals, who fear the industrialisation of one of Ireland's most ecologically and economically sensitive marine zones. At the centre of the controversy is Area A, also known as Tomn Nua, one of four zones identified under the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (SC-DMAP) for offshore renewable energy (ORE) development. Located just 12 kilometres from the Waterford shoreline, Tomn Nua is facing mounting resistance from fishing communities, environmental groups, and residents who argue the site is fundamentally unsuitable for such infrastructure.

A key concern is the absence of a coherent national marine spatial plan backed by a strategic environmental assessment, as required under EU law (notably the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive 2014/89/EU). Rather than addressing this legislative gap, the government has adopted a piecemeal strategy through Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs); a 'patchwork approach' that many say has already eroded public trust. Introduced in May 2024, the SC-DMAP was billed as a move away from a developer-led model towards a state-guided process. However, many argue it was compromised from the outset.

Dr. Michael O'Meara, a Waterford-based environmental advocate, points to the timeline: the public consultation on the four proposed areas (A through D) opened on the same day the government issued energy auction documents to the wind industry for Area A. 'This was not a consultation in any meaningful sense,' he said. 'The auction was already in motion before a single public comment had been submitted. It appears the decision had already been made.'

Critics say this procedural shortfall is just one of many flaws plaguing the SC-DMAP. The approved plan has come under

fire from scientists and fishing organisations who allege it prioritises energy development over ecological integrity. Their concerns stem from the Celtic Sea Ecological Sensitivity Analysis (CS-ESA), which found all four DMAP zones to be highly sensitive marine areas. Despite identifying vital habitats, spawning grounds, and biodiversity hotspots, the very same zones were nonetheless earmarked for development, raising serious doubts about the integrity of the selection process.

The local fishing industry is particularly at risk. The DMAP areas fall within key fishing grounds that last year recorded over 3,650 fishing days, according to Bord Iascaigh Mhara. These waters are essential for lobster and brown crab populations and support extensive demersal trawling by small vessels under 12 metres; the backbone of Ireland's inshore fleet and coastal employment. Fishermen warn of displacement to less productive waters, loss of income, and a persistent lack of meaningful engagement from the government. Further environmental objections have been raised over potential plans to dump an estimated 165,000 cubic metres of rock, equivalent to 10,000 truckloads, to protect turbine foundations on Area A alone.

Recently published research suggests this could cause irreparable harm to fragile seabed ecosystems. Additional scrutiny is now focused on the government's upcoming energy auctions under the Offshore Renewable Energy Support Scheme 2.1. This first auction, focused on Area A, offers a 20-year fixed-price contract to the lowest bidder. Notably, the October 2024 SC-DMAP designated Area A in a location almost identical to one where energy firm Energia had already conducted detailed surveys as part of its North Celtic Sea wind farm project. While an official from the Department of Climate and Communications denied prior

knowledge of the Forshore Licence granted to Energia, that facilitated their data collection, at the very least, the overlap raises questions about impartiality. Because Energia already holds extensive survey data on the seabed, metocean conditions, and local ecology, they are uniquely positioned to submit a highly competitive bid. Rival bidders, relying solely on government-supplied data, are at a disadvantage, fuelling claims of an uneven playing field.

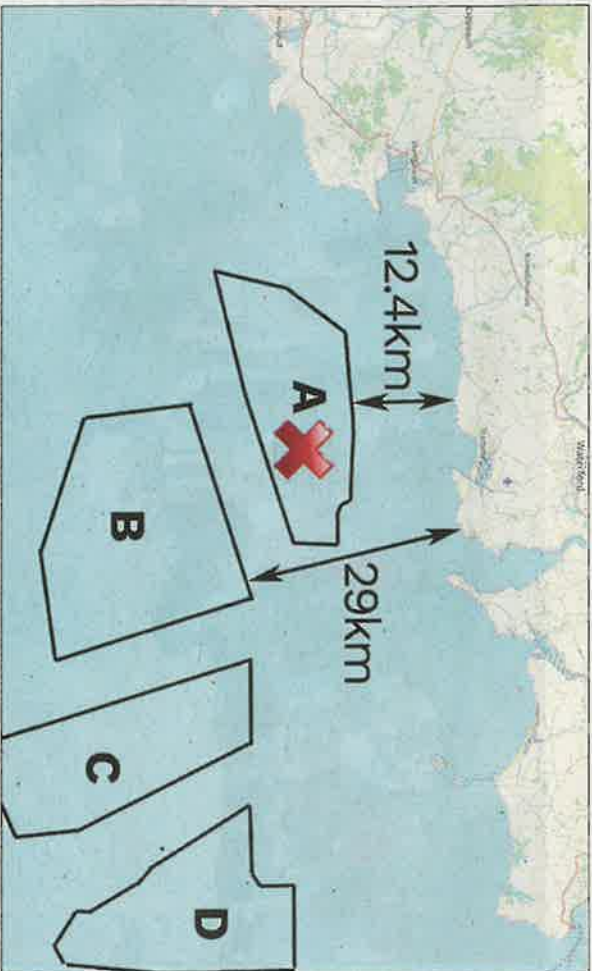
The broader implications are striking. Ireland's coastline stretches roughly 1,360 kilometres. To meet the government's 2050 goal of 37GW of offshore wind capacity, an estimated 2,460 turbines would be required. That equates to one turbine every 550 metres around the entire coast – north, south, east, and west. While this won't materialise in such a literal pattern, current policies suggest a future where our natural seascape is dominated by 300-metre-high steel towers and spinning blades. On the east coast, current planning applications are proposing turbines just six kilometres offshore, contrary to international best practice, which typically recommends placing such developments farther out to protect coastal views and nearshore ecosystems.

As the Area A auction approaches, pressure is mounting for the government to pause and reassess. For many in Waterford and the wider southeast, the core question is not whether Ireland should embrace renewable energy, but how it should be implemented, and for whose benefit. Fishing organisations, environmentalists, and community members are calling for a moratorium on the auction and a comprehensive review of the SC-DMAP process. They are demanding a new strategic environmental assessment, updated socio-economic studies, and an inclusive consultation process that genuinely engages all affected stakeholders. 'We're not against offshore

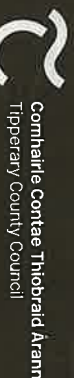
wind development,' said a spokesperson for Blue Horizon, a Waterford-based advocacy group. 'We're against top-down decisions that ignore science, communities, and sustainability, all in the name of attaining short term targets. But, if we get this wrong, the damage will be irreversible.'

There is growing demand for transparent, impartial planning that upholds EU directives and treats coastal communities as partners in shaping Ireland's energy future. We can harness the ocean's power, but the window for doing so responsibly is closing. The current trajectory risks scarring our coasts for generations and locking in decades of regret. There is still time to chart a wiser course, but that requires the government to act decisively now. It is not too late.

DR. MICHAEL O'MEARA



The image represents the four areas of the South Coast DMAP which are now zoned as potential sites for the development of offshore windfarms.



## TEMPORARY CLOSING OF ROAD ROADS ACT, 1993-2015, (SECTION 75 OF THE ROADS ACT 1993) ROADS REGULATIONS, 1994 DECISION TO CLOSE THE L-6513 AT SIR THOMAS BRIDGE, CLONMEL, CO. TIPPERARY

NOTICE is hereby given that Tipperary County Council has made an Order closing:

ROAD TO BE CLOSED:	L-6513 (Sir Thomas Bridge) from its junction with Ferryhouse to its junction with the R680.
PERIOD OF CLOSURE:	07:30hrs on Monday 16 June 2025 to 18:30hrs on Thursday 28 August 2025.
ALTERNATIVE ROUTES:	All traffic will be diverted via the R680 Clonmel to Carrick on Suir Road or the N24 Clonmel to Carrick on Suir. Local access permitted only.
REASON FOR CLOSURE:	To facilitate bridge repairs.



## NOTICE OF INTENTION TO ACQUIRE 3 PROPERTIES COMPULSORILY UNDER THE DERELICT SITES ACT, 1990 (as amended by the Planning and Development Act, 2000)

- Compulsory Acquisition (CPA) No. 9 of 2025 – 20 Church Street, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
- Compulsory Acquisition (CPA) No. 10 of 2025 – 21 Church Street, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
- Compulsory Acquisition (CPA) No. 11 of 2025 – 10 Allen Street, Cappoquin, Co. Waterford

NOTICE is hereby given that Waterford City & County Council (hereinafter referred to as "the Council") in exercise of the powers conferred on it by Section 14 of the Derelict Sites Act, 1990 intends to acquire compulsorily under the said Act, the property described hereunder.

A copy of the orders and of the maps referred to in it may be viewed at:

- <https://waterfordcouncil.ie/media/newspaper-adverts>
- Waterford City & County Council Customer Service Offices at Bailey's New Street, Waterford City or Civic Offices Dungarvan, Co. Waterford between the hours of 9.30am – 4pm

By scanning the QR Code below:



Any owner, lessee or occupier (except a tenant for a month or a period less than a month) may, on or before 20th June, 2025 submit to the local authority an objection to the proposed compulsory acquisition of the property. Any such objection must be in writing stating the grounds of the objection and addressed to Ivan Grimes, Director of Services, Planning, Corporate Services, Culture, HR & IS, Waterford City & County Council, City Hall, The Mall, Waterford.

The Derelict Sites Act, 1990 (as amended by the Planning and Development Act, 2000) provides that if an objection is made to the proposed compulsory acquisition of the property and the objection is not withdrawn, the property shall not be acquired compulsorily by the local authority without the consent of An Bord Pleanála.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY PROPOSED TO BE ACQUIRED

#### ALL THAT AND THOSE

the property known as 20 Church Street, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford covering an area of 0.0577 acres or thereabouts, in the District Electoral Division of Dungarvan-Lismore and as more particularly delineated on Map Ref. CPA 2025-09 – Plot 101.

the property known as 21 Church Street, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford covering an area of 0.0625 acres or thereabouts, in the District Electoral Division of Dungarvan-Lismore and as more particularly delineated on Map Ref. CPA 2025-10 – Plot 101.

the property known as 10 Allen Street, Cappoquin, Co. Waterford covering an area of 0.0586 acres or thereabouts, in the District Electoral Division of Dungarvan-Lismore and as more particularly delineated on Map Ref. CPA 2025-11 – Plot 101.

DATED THIS 9th MAY, 2025.

SEAN MCKEOWN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE,  
WATERFORD CITY & COUNTY COUNCIL,  
CITY HALL, WATERFORD.