

Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) – Volume 2

Chapter 2 – Planning Context and Need for the Proposed Development

**Proposed ORE Capable Terminal on a 250m
Wharf Extension & Ancillary Operational
Support Infrastructure**

Port of Waterford Company

Port of Waterford, Belview, Co. Kilkenny



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APPENDICES CHAPTER 2

Appendix 2-1: An Bord Pleanála Meeting Notes

2 PLANNING CONTEXT AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter of the EIAR sets out the need for the Proposed Development and also provides a summary of the planning history of the Site and adjoining lands. It also considers relevant planning policies at national, regional and local levels.

The Port of Waterford company was incorporated as a commercial state-owned body in 1999. It provides facilities for the loading and discharge of container, bulk, break bulk and general cargoes. The commercial port at Belview on the Lower Suir Estuary comprises ca. 960m of marginal quays capable of handling ships of up to 9m draft and 190m length. The riverside berthage is backed up by open and covered storage areas and warehouses within a 265ha area of the designated Belview Port Zone. Operations are carried out by licenced stevedores and industrial operators within the port zone.

Belview Port Terminal is one of five ports of national significance within the terms of National Ports Policy 2013 [1] and is classified as a comprehensive port on the EU's TEN-T network.

2.2 Port of Waterford Master Plan 2020-2044

The Port of Waterford Master Plan 2020-2044 is a non-statutory document published in October 2019. The Master Plan provides the framework to allow the Port to bring forward essential projects for planning and consent purposes, with a medium / long-term perspective. The Master Plan was supported by Strategic Environmental Assessment ('SEA'), Appropriate Assessment ('AA') and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment ('SFRA'). As part of the SEA Process, a public consultation was undertaken. A number of key projects / deliverables were identified in the Master Plan [2].

A proposed 400m quay extension was a key element of the Master Plan proposals. The provisions of this Master Plan are noted and supported in the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan ('KCCDP') 2021 – 2027 [3] (see Section 2.11.1.3 below).

Figure 2-1: Port of Waterford Master Plan



A 'Master Plan' is an iterative blueprint that is responsive to change and capable of modification. The impending requirement for ORE facilities was not known and, therefore, was not considered as one of the key projects / deliverables when the Master Plan was being prepared.

The Port is located close to proposed windfarms in the Celtic Sea. It could also support windfarms in the Irish Sea and is 2.5km from the Great Island Power Station, which is the site of the Pembrokehire – Wexford Greenlink interconnector.

2.3 Planning History

There is an extensive planning history associated with Port of Waterford, dating back to 1989 when the parent permission for the Port was granted.

2.3.1 Waterford Port Belview

Planning permissions relating to the establishment and development of the Belview Port are described in Table 2-1 below.

Table 2-1: Planning Permissions for the Development of Belview Port

Planning Reference	Description
KCC Ref: 241/89 ABP PI10.81162	Original grant of planning permission for the development of port facilities at Belview. This is the parent permission establishing the primary use as a port.
KCC Ref: P.258/93 ABP.91703	Planning permission granted to change the usage of the permitted wharves to handle aggregates, coal, feedstuffs, fertilisers and timber.
KCC Ref: 683/94 ABP PI10.96935	Planning permission granted for 300m extension of the port and an extension of the range of usage of specified berths to handle an extended range of cargo.
KCC P00/1848 ABP PI10.126809	Permission granted for extension, use of berths and training wall. ABP, on 6th November 2002, granted permission for a major expansion of wharves and other facilities at Belview Port, in a downstream direction, including additional wharves, a Training Wall, etc.
KCC P08/1564	KCC granted permission to POW for a broadening of the goods which can be handled at Belview Port to include scrap metal. That permission dealt with delivery, handling and stockpiling (storage in compounds) of scrap metal on the Quays by independent operators. This permission was put into effect.

There is a significant planning history relating to a stevedoring company with a presence on a private wharf within the port area, with a summary of the planning permission history set out in Table 2-2 below.

Table 2-2: Planning Permission relating to activities on a private wharf within Belview Port

Planning Reference	Description
KCC Ref. 11/397	Stokestown Port Services (Suir Shipping) received permission for bulk stores in five warehouses adjacent to their wharf, to store port-related goods.
KCC Ref: 12/416	Permission was granted for bagging and palletising port-related goods in store 5.
KCC Ref: 13/585	Two additional warehouses for port-related activities were granted permission and constructed.
KCC Ref: 17/763	Permission was granted for the acceptance of and bagging for export of waste material.
KCC Ref: 19/328	Permission was granted for acceptance of and processing for export of non-hazardous waste into baled fuel for export.
KCC Ref. 21/1030	Suir Shipping Ltd. received planning permission from Kilkenny County Council for repurposing the 11/397 store for handling and temporary storage of zinc and lead ore in an existing bulk store adjacent to their wharf to facilitate export of 210,000 tonnes per annum from the adjacent wharf (February 2022).

An Eco-cement / Concrete Batching facility operates from this wharf area, permitted as summarised in Table 2-3 below.

Table 2-3: Planning Permissions relating to an Eco-cement / Concrete Batching Facility within Belview Port

Reference	Description
KCC Ref: 98/1434 ABP 117167	Permission granted for construction of two 1750 tonne cement silos.
KCC Ref: 04/1563	Permission was granted for a truck loading station.
KCC Ref: 05/1722 ABP 216658	Permission granted for two additional 1750 tonne silos for storage and despatching bulk cement.
KCC Ref: 05/1728 ABP 218626	Planning permission granted for milling and storage to produce GGBS additive eco-cement.
KCC Ref: 08/15	Permission granted for expansion of the eco-cement facility.

2.3.2 Inland Development Area

Inland has extensive industrial and logistics-based operations associated with the Port on both sides of the N29.

There is an expanding IDA Science and Technology Park located on the west side of the N29, with significant food ingredients plants, existing and under development. On the east side of the N29, there are a number of port-related import / export operations, mainly in fertilisers, agri-feedstuffs, etc. The Applicant acquired approximately 24ha (60 acres) some years ago. The majority of the land has been subdivided for port-related development:

Arvum / Seed Technology acquired ca. 5.7ha (14 acres):

- Ca. 3.6ha (9 acres) has already been developed and is in operation (KCC Ref: 15/397).

Suir Shipping acquired ca. 9.3ha (23 acres):

- Ca. 2.1ha (5 acres) has already been developed (KCC Ref: 18/317) and is in operation;
- Ca. 1.3ha (3.2 acres) is available at the lower end of the site for landscaping;
- The remaining ca. 6ha (14.8 acres) was the subject of application (KCC Ref. 20/552) for eight additional bulk stores, access and landscaping;
- Permission was granted to Suir Shipping Limited for the development of 2 no. grain silos and associated site works (KCC Ref. 20/60256) and for the use of an existing storage shed for the storage of selected waste materials in addition to the current storage of bulk port-related materials at Shed H4 (KCC Ref. 25/60152); and,
- A current application by Suir Shipping Limited seeks permission for the extension of the existing access road and construction of a new clear span bridge (KCC Ref. 25/60254).

SmartPly Europe are acquiring ca. 5.3ha (13.14 acres) in order to extend their existing log yard.

The Port of Waterford ('POW') have retained the remainder. The existing access road is on POW property, with a retained reservation to facilitate the extension of this road. POW has also retained a strip along the western and northern sides of the Suir Shipping site for

maintenance access to the lands zoned Passive Open Space. Access to the lands zoned Passive Open Space will be available from the Access Road along a route to the west and north of the Suir Shipping and SmartPly lands. POW will retain ownership of this access. POW and Suir Shipping own the Passive Open Space zoned lands.

Planning Register Ref No. 17/42

On the 26th May 2017, the Planning Authority granted permission to Port of Waterford Company for site development works, including security fencing, access control barriers and lighting for truck trailer parking and laydown for port-related goods, subject to 10 Conditions.

Planning Register Ref No. 18/317

On the 16th May 2018, the Planning Authority granted Planning Permission to Suir Shipping for Bulk Stores and associated Site Works, including two weighbridges, weighbridge office, entrance gates and fencing, concrete paving, water services including a borewell and a water storage tank, drainage and wastewater treatment.

Planning Register Ref. No. 20/552

By Order dated the 16th February 2021, KCC granted permission to Suir Shipping Ltd. for a further 8 Bulk Stores and other storage and a landscaping scheme at lower levels close to the Suir river, on lands zoned Passive Open Space in the Ferrybank / Belview LAP 2018 – 2023.

Planning Register Ref. No. 24/60103

Additional Port-related zoned farmland was purchased, and part of that land was subject to an application by GABM Limited for permission for the construction of an integrated plasterboard manufacturing facility on a site of 11.5ha at Gorteens. Permission was granted by An Coimisiún Pleanála (Ref. ABP-321962-25) on 1st August 2025.

2.4 Description of Development

The Proposed Development will include an ORE Capable Terminal located on a 250m wharf extension, land reclamation, ancillary works and biodiversity enhancement area (gross site area ca. 8ha), partly on land and partly in the nearshore area of the coastal planning authority (Kilkenny County Council) at Port of Waterford, Belview, Co. Kilkenny.

See Chapter 3 for full details.

2.5 Need for the Proposed Development

Globally, there is clear recognition that action to mitigate climate change is necessary. This resulted from the Paris Agreement 2015 – an international effort to halt the global increase in temperature to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. According to the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ('IPCC'), in order to achieve the 2°C objective, global GHG emissions must be reduced by 40-70% by 2050 compared to 2010 and be near zero by 2100 [4]. The key to achieving this level of emission reduction will be the preparation and implementation of low-carbon development strategies. The EU target for 2030 is to achieve a 40% reduction in domestic GHG emissions compared to 1990 [5].

Renewable energy technologies play a vital role in the reduction of greenhouse gas ('GHG') emissions. In Ireland, wind energy generated 33.7% of all electricity consumption in 2023, which is second only to natural gas [6]. However, 3.5% of electricity in Ireland was still generated by coal, the fuel with the highest GHG emissions as well as emissions of other pollutants, in 2018 [6]. It is paramount to transition to non-fossil fuel sources of electricity as fast as possible in order to achieve national (and international) GHG emission reduction goals.

The key need for the Proposed Development is that it will facilitate the Port of Waterford's objective of Belview Port being a key port to serve Ireland's growing ORE sector over the next 10 – 15 years.

A recent report produced by the Carbon Trust for the Irish Wind Energy Association and part-funded by Green Tech Skillnet, *Harnessing Our Potential*, calls for strategic investment into one or more Irish ports to take advantage of the commercial opportunity of delivering 3.5GW of offshore wind by 2030 [7]. This is the level required by the State's Climate Action Plan.

In this detailed readiness assessment of 16 Irish ports under physical characteristics and connectivity, Belview Port was one of just two ports, along with Dublin, to meet all requirements. Waterford also scored strongly for the availability of additional land for development, proximity to existing offshore wind farm developments and access to the national road and rail network.

The report's authors say:

"The [Port of Waterford's] physical characteristics and connectivity mean it has good potential to serve the growth in offshore wind. It is currently one of the few ports in the Republic of Ireland capable of handling the weight of larger offshore wind turbines. Existing brownfield land at the port already in use for storing onshore wind turbines has the potential to accommodate staging with little investment or manufacturing with significant investment. Given the area available to the Port, it is well-placed to serve the construction stage of offshore wind with a certain level of investment. Redevelopment of other lands around Belview has also the potential for the Port to become an offshore wind cluster if the economic case can be proven."

The Proposed Development will provide more berthing and lay-down area for large vessels serving the construction of offshore wind farms and for smaller vessels serving the operation and maintenance of offshore installations.

The Government provides annual and quarterly (overseen by the Taoiseach) updates on progress under the Climate Action Plan, including in the 2025 review [8], as follows:

"This Climate Action Plan sets out the roadmap to deliver on Ireland's climate ambition. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings agreed by Government and will enable Ireland to make progress towards our 2030 targets and be well placed to meet mid-century decarbonisation objectives."

2.6 Government Policy Statement on the facilitation of Offshore Renewable Energy by Commercial Ports in Ireland

Government Policy Statement on the Facilitation of Offshore Renewable Energy by Commercial Ports in Ireland, 2021 [9] indicated that a multiport approach will be required to address the needs of the ORE industry. This approach is best suited to deliver ORE targets 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.

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.

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. 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. It was recognised that there are opportunities for O&M services at Waterford Port.

The policy statement recognises that, *‘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... 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.’*

The policy statement was linked to the preparation of the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (‘SC-DMAP’), which is referenced elsewhere in this Chapter.

2.7 Current Legislative Provisions

The Maritime Area Planning Act (‘MAPA’) 2021 introduced a new planning framework for proposed developments located in the maritime area. Part of MAPA is transposed into the Planning & Development Act (‘PDA’), 2000 (as amended) as Part XXI ‘Maritime Development’. The relevant provisions of Part XXI as they relate to the Proposed Development are summarised below:

- Under Section 285(1)(c)(ii), the Proposed Development is of a class specified in the *Eighth Schedule*. It is partly located on land and partly in the nearshore area of a coastal planning authority (Kilkenny County Council);
- Such development is subject to the provisions of Chapter III of Part XXI;
- The *Eighth Schedule* includes “A harbour or port installation involving the construction of a quay greater than 100 metres in length”;
- Section 287(1) requires that a prospective applicant shall, before making an application, consult with ABP; and,
- To submit a Planning Application for development under Chapter III, the applicant must have sought and received a Maritime Area Consent (‘MAC’) from the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (‘MARA’).

2.8 Pre-Application Consultation

In response to the Government initiatives on climate change, decarbonization and use of the marine (maritime area) for offshore renewable energy exploitation, POW made a submission for pre-application consultation (‘PAC’) to An Bord Pleanála (‘ABP’) under Strategic Infrastructure Development (‘SID’) protocols in November 2022 (Consultation Ref. 315199 – 22) for Proposed ORE Capable Terminal located on a 250-metre quay extension and ancillary operational support infrastructure at Port of Waterford, Belview, Co. Kilkenny. Two PAC meetings were held with ABP in February and June 2023 – refer to Appendix 2-1 for meeting notes.

Upon the commencement of MAPA, the proposal became subject to new protocols under Part XXI of the PDA, including the requirement for engagement with ABP under that legislation. A request for PAC was made on 7th February 2024, and a meeting was held on 21st March 2024 under Ref. ABP-319047-24. ABP concluded the consultation process under Part XXI by letter dated 10 May 2024 (see Appendix 1-1).

The requirements for making the application, as set out in the letter, have been followed in the preparation of the subject planning application. Please refer to Appendix 2-1 for ABP’s Inspector’s Report, Record of Meeting and Letter to Applicant under Ref. ABP-319047-24.

A Maritime Area Consent ('MAC') has been granted by the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority ('MARA'), dated 16th June 2025 for the following: The construction, use, operation and maintenance of port facilities, including all associated decommissioning, demolition, rehabilitation and any other works required on foot of any development permission relating to the port facilities in respect of the specific project described in this planning application.

2.9 Maritime Spatial Planning

The EU Maritime Spatial Planning ('MSP') Directive was transposed into Irish Law via the Maritime Area Planning Act ('MAPA') 2021.

The National Marine Planning Framework ('NMPF') 2021 deals with a marine area of 495,000 square kilometres. This area is broken down into Designated Areas, which will be subject to statutory Designated Maritime Area Plans ('DMAPs'). DMAPs, with associated SEA and AA, will support quick deployment and faster decision-making in a plan-led context. DMAPs will become a binding consideration for marine decision makers based on a state-identified sequential location for ORE roll-out.

2.10 Offshore Renewable Energy ORE Developments

Since 2022, there has been a change in focus and urgency at the National level to advance ORE strategic infrastructure. In October 2022, the EU requested an acceleration of planning procurement procedures due to the energy crisis arising from the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

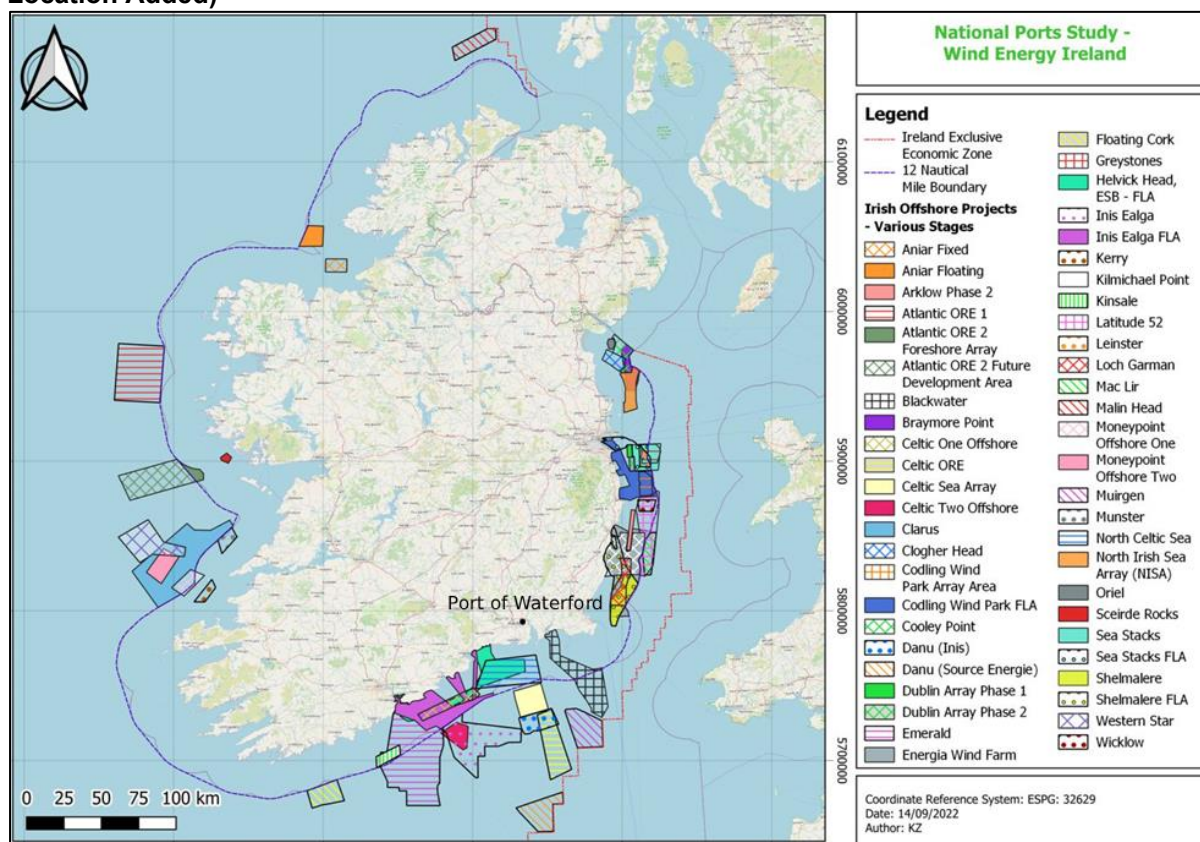
The SC-DMAP was approved by the Government on 10th October 2024 as a sub-national plan concentrating on ORE [10]. The Government Climate Action Plan 2023 sets a target to procure 900MW offshore wind capacity within this maritime area by 2030 (ORESS 2 auction), with more capacity beyond this initial target in the longer-term perspective [11].

The ORE DMAP, to be situated off the South Coast of Ireland, has the following identified advantages:

- Sea depth allows the use of proven technology – fixed bottom offshore wind;
- Proximity to several ports capable of supporting installation and servicing; and,
- Integration with onshore EirGrid infrastructure, potential for proximate offshore substations and subsea interconnectors.

The map below shows the Port of Waterford in the context of planned Irish Offshore wind projects [12].

Figure 2-2: Map of All Planned Irish Offshore Wind Projects in Irish Waters [12] (Port of Waterford Location Added)



2.11 Planning Policy Context

2.11.1 National & Regional Planning Context

2.11.1.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework ('NPF') 2018 recognises Belview Port as a Tier 2 Port of strategic national importance, enhanced by proximity to trading partners in Europe, as follows:

- National ports policy also recognises the Tier 2 ports of Belview and Rosslare-Europort, because of the potential to grow traffic through these ports, their proximity to key trading partners and their strategic transport roles beyond their immediate environs; and,
- Strategic plans for relevant Tier 1 and 2 ports and corresponding city growth strategies should align and be consistent with the broader aims and policies for the effective growth and sustainable development of the city regions.

The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, gives a statutory underpinning to the NPF that is now reaffirmed through the Planning and Development Act, 2024, signed into law but not yet commenced into effect (as of August 2025), which provides for a strengthened plan-led system based on an integrated hierarchy of plan-making, with the NPF at the apex of that hierarchy.

As of July 2025, the NPF has been revised to take into account emerging and anticipated trends in population growth and spatial distribution. The National Planning Framework ('NPF'), as reviewed, is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country out to the year 2040. In the period between 2022 and 2040, it is expected that there will be roughly an extra one million people living in our country, to

approximately 6.1 million (the ESRI has also modelled a higher international migration scenario with a projected population of 6.3 million people by 2040 (baseline + 200,000)).

Chapter 7 deals with Realising our Island and Marine Potential and also deals with the integration of Terrestrial Planning and Marine Planning, as illustrated below:

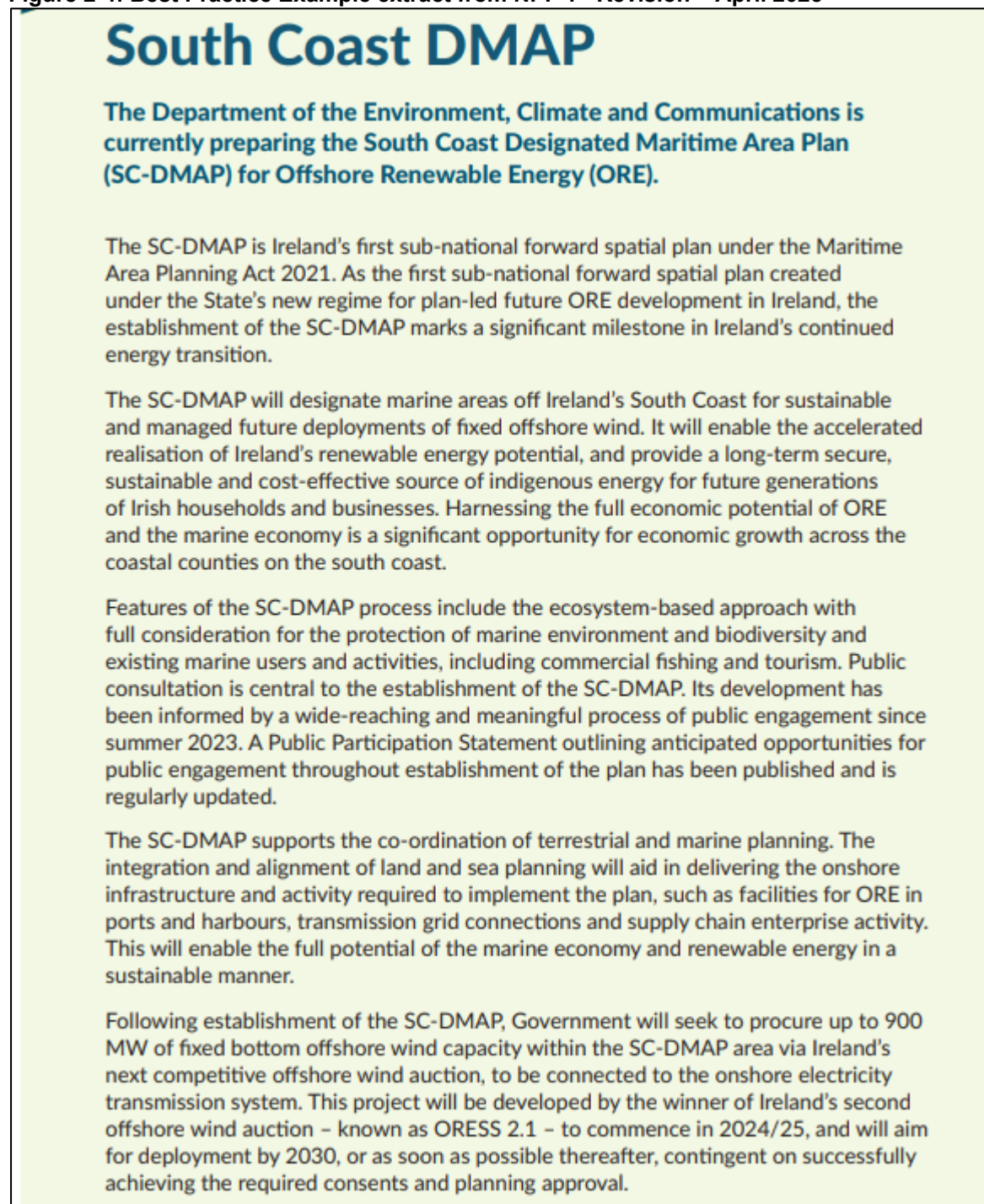
Figure 2-3: Relationships between Planning Policy and Maritime Policy ('NPF')

Planning Policy	Hierarchy	Maritime Policy
National		
National Planning Framework	High Level Aims and Objectives National-Focus	National Marine Planning Framework
Regional		
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies	Policies of Regional Significance and Focus for co-operation and implementation	Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs) Maritime Spatial Planning at a sub- national level. These plans can have a sectoral or geographic focus and will contribute to the planning framework for maritime development.
Local		
Development Plan and Local Area Plan	Detailed objectives and locally devised approaches	Localised land-sea interaction and the role of coastal local authorities to manage the nearshore (the sea area 5km or 3 nautical miles from shore). DMAPs may be prepared for the specified parts of the nearshore area.

The revised National Planning Framework will be incorporated into the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and the City and County Development Plans, including updated Housing Supply Targets.

The NPF also references the SC-DMAP as a Case Study (see Figure 2-4).

Figure 2-4: Best Practice Example extract from NPF 1st Revision – April 2025



2.11.1.2 National Marine Planning Policy Statement

The draft Marine Planning Policy Statement ('MPPS') [13], issued by the Government in July 2025, is complementary to the revised NPF 2025. The MPPS is a high-level document prepared by the Department of Climate, Energy and Environment ('DCEE').

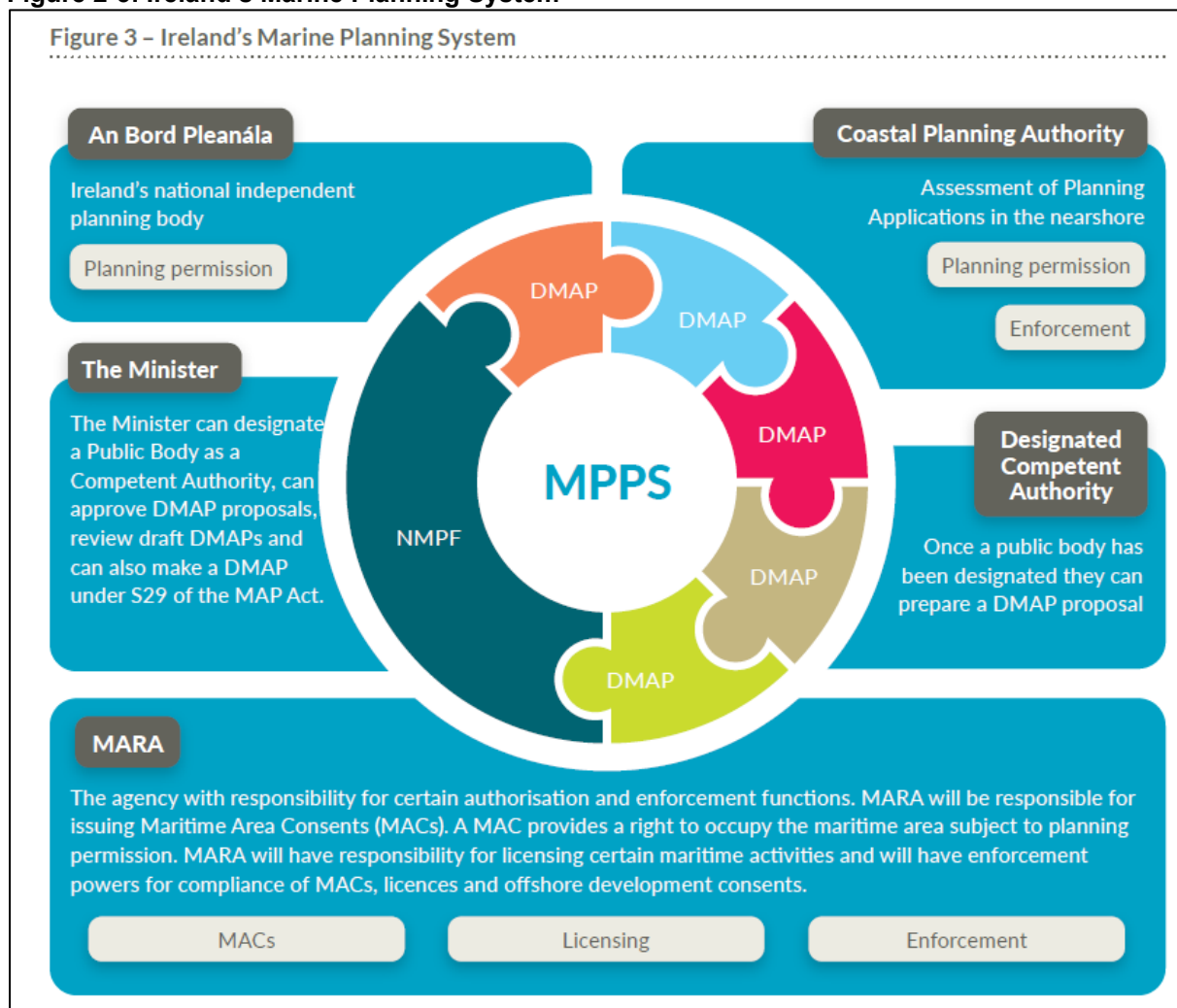
It is set out in 7 sections.

Sections 1 and 2 set out the background and progress to date in developing marine planning.

Section 3 sets out the marine planning system, diagrammatically represented in Figure 2-5 below.

Section 4 deals with DMAPs, also illustrated below.

Figure 2-5: Ireland's Marine Planning System



Section 5 sets out the Principles of Marine Planning that should underpin project preparation and decision-making.

Section 6 sets out priorities for - **Stewardship** – Environmental, Social and Cultural; **Security** in relation to Energy, including ORE and Gas emergency reserve, interconnectors, telecoms and cyber threats, Food and Fisheries, National Security/Defence, etc; **Prosperity** - by planning for organised use of resources, empowering communities, etc; including, inter alia, the following of relevance to the Proposed Development:

Environmental stewardship

Environmental stewardship in marine planning recognises the intrinsic value of the marine environment and critical role marine ecosystems play in sustaining life on earth. Our marine environment is home to a diverse array of complex ecosystems which provide us with many benefits including; regulating climate, supporting fisheries and providing cultural and ecosystem services. As custodians of our seas, we want our marine planning system to protect its richness and benefits through sustainable management for present and future generations.

Social and Cultural Stewardship

Cultural stewardship in marine planning recognises and respects traditional knowledge, systems and practices, acknowledging the contributions of local communities to marine health and management. Social stewardship involves ensuring equitable access to marine resources, supporting community participation and inclusivity in marine planning processes. Rural coastal development is integrally linked to policies across a wide range of areas, including the marine. The marine economy is a key enabler of effective regional development, especially in coastal communities.

Security

Energy Security (including strategic gas emergency reserve, offshore transmission infrastructure & interconnection and ORE)

Effective marine planning is critical to Ireland's energy security. As set out in Ireland's Energy Security Strategy, Energy Security in Ireland to 2030, our future energy security will be achieved through the transition from an energy system that is reliant on fossil fuels to an electricity-led system that maximises our renewable energy potential, flexibility and is integrated into Europe's energy systems through interconnection.

Effective marine planning provides greater resilience to our electricity sector, by facilitating greater electricity interconnection capacity that enables a more diverse supply mix and greater resilience in case of infrastructure failure of single assets.

Offshore renewable energy (ORE) is a key policy priority for the Government, and Ireland has the potential to be a world leader in ORE (Offshore Renewable Energy Framework Policy Statement). The development of ORE will make a significant contribution towards achieving Ireland's legally binding decarbonisation obligations, including achieving a climate neutral economy by no later than 2050. The targets set for ORE delivery in Ireland's exclusive economic zone are therefore highly ambitious: 5GW by 2030, 20GW by 2040; and at least 37GW in total by 2050. Deployment at this scale will deliver multiple climate, environment, and economic benefits for Ireland including direct and indirect job opportunities and significant upgrade and investment in our ports.

It is important to note that as an Island nation, Ireland's commercial ports will play a key role in the deployment of ORE infrastructure and in securing the energy supply for the state into the future. In this regard it is crucial that the strategic development of commercial ports to provide the capacity to facilitate the delivery of the Governments ORE targets is prioritised.

Offshore Transmission Infrastructure and Interconnection

The development of an offshore electricity transmission network will be key to realising Ireland's full ORE potential. This new network will enable the achievement of our decarbonisation objectives, supporting the growth of new, decarbonised, economic opportunities and has the potential to strengthen the Single Electricity Market (SEM) grid network.

Our international electricity interconnectedness also relies on the effectiveness of the marine planning system. Interconnection will play a central role in Ireland's journey to Net Zero transition and Europe's energy future. To maximise benefits, the growth of interconnection capacity will be closely aligned with the identification of offshore renewable energy potential through DMAPs and the related expansion of our national offshore grid. Increased connectivity to more countries will enhance Ireland's energy security, enable better balancing of renewable energy intermittency, and provide additional markets for our offshore energy potential.

Maritime transport security

As an Island nation, Ireland's commercial ports, including approaches to ports and associated shipping routes, are our key international maritime gateways, with at least 90% of Ireland's trade by volume exported and imported by sea. Our ports connect Ireland to the rest of the world via these routes in terms of trade, transport and tourism. Our transport security can be supported by the marine planning system through:

- Supporting the strategic development of ports to increase the provision of necessary port capacity. Ports of National Significance are supported as a key objective in both National Ports Policy and the Government's National Development Plan;*
- Supporting Ireland's capability to develop additional ports capacity in a timely and predictable manner, given the importance of ports in connecting Ireland to the rest of the world in terms of trade and transport. This builds on the core objective of National Ports Policy to facilitate a competitive and effective market for maritime transport services; and,*
- Optimising the prioritisation of essential trade routes to address any issues around competition for sea space and spatial squeeze of shipping, which may occur as the Government progresses its climate targets and ambitions.*

National Security / Defence

As an island nation, the question of our maritime security is paramount. Given the extensive sea and air lines of communication, fishery protection responsibilities, undersea cables and energy production capacity and infrastructure, maritime security represents a priority action area for the Government, not least given the increase in suspicious activity by foreign militaries in Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in recent times. The security of undersea fibre optic cables, which represent vital but vulnerable components of the international communications infrastructure are a particularly important feature in this regard, while the security of energy infrastructure is also of critical importance given Ireland's island status and plans in relation to offshore renewables.

The Government has committed to developing a National Maritime Security Strategy, with the necessary resourcing, accompanying legislation and decision-making systems in place. Marine planning will be an important part of the overall framework of national defence strategy, as it allows Government to identify and protect strategic assets vital to national defence, such as naval bases, ports, subsea connectivity infrastructure and offshore energy installations. By designating and prioritising these areas within marine spatial plans, authorities can support their security and implement measures to safeguard them against potential.

Prosperity

Ireland has a diverse maritime economy, deriving prosperity from a broad scope of maritime activities. These range from traditional activities such as fisheries, aquaculture, ports, shipping and tourism, to modern technologies such as subsea energy and telecoms infrastructure, gas and electricity interconnection and offshore renewable energy. Marine planning plays a pivotal role in unlocking the economic potential of maritime sectors while preserving the long-term health and resilience of marine ecosystems.

Marine planning enables Governments to allocate marine space and resources efficiently, balancing competing interests and maximising economic opportunities. By identifying suitable areas for various activities, such as fishing grounds, and offshore wind farms, as well as protecting shipping lanes and aquaculture zones, Ireland's marine planning system will facilitate the responsible and safe use of marine resources to the benefit of all citizens while minimising conflicts and environmental impacts.

Marine planning guides the development of critical maritime infrastructure, such as ports, harbours, shipping terminals, and offshore installations. By identifying priority areas for infrastructure investment, optimising infrastructure networks, and integrating land-sea connections, Ireland's marine planning system will facilitate the efficient and safe movement of goods, people, and energy, supporting trade, commerce, and economic development.

Our coastal and island communities are surrounded by an abundance of marine resources and, traditionally, marine activities such as seafaring and fishing comprise an important part of the economies and heritage of these communities. The marine planning system will empower these communities by ensuring equitable access to marine resources, supporting fisheries and aquaculture, promoting coastal tourism and recreation, and investing in coastal infrastructure and resilience measures. Development of ORE projects will also support future diversification in employment and ensure that coastal areas benefit from opportunities in this sector, including through supply chain opportunities. By fostering the socio-economic development of coastal areas, marine planning will contribute to the prosperity and resilience of coastal communities.

Section 7 – Review and Monitoring

Given the pace and intensity of current developments in technological and scientific innovation and applied research within the marine sector generally, and their potential impact on the marine bio-resource, Section 6 of the MAP Act 2021 allows for the Minister to formally review the MPPS at any stage after the 3-year minimum duration period specified in the MAP Act.

Additionally, and in accordance with Section 17 of the MAP Act 2021, the Minister is also obliged to review the National Marine Planning Framework by May 2027.

2.11.1.3 Southern Regional Assembly ('SRA'), Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy ('RSES')

This RSES is to be revised on foot of the NPF 1st Revision, which allocates more population and economic strengthening to the cities, including Waterford.

The Port is located within the Waterford City Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan ('MASP') area, identified as a Tier 2 Port, a strategic employment zone (No. 4), an international gateway and a regional economic asset, with strategic linkages to the nationally important Eastern Corridor economic zone (EU TEN-T network) with a view to strengthening freight and logistics facilities, including rail freight.

Figure 2-6: Extract from Southern Regional Assembly RSES

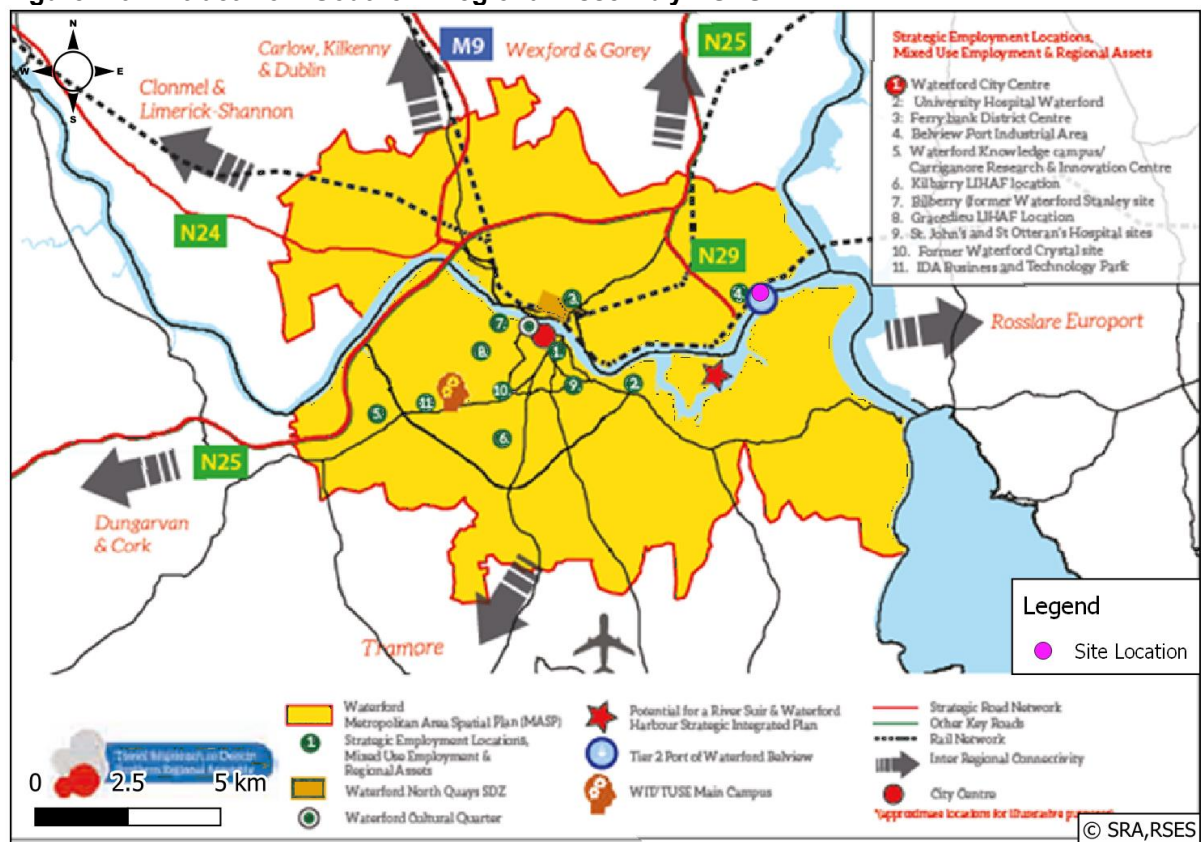


Figure 2-7: Extract from Southern Regional Assembly RSES relating to Belview Port



Figure 2-8: Extract from Southern Regional Assembly RSES relating to Strategic Employment Locations



2.11.2 Local Planning Policy Context

2.11.2.1 Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2017 ('KCCDP')

The KCCDP will be revised on foot of revisions in the Southern Regional Assembly RSES. As of July 2025, public consultation for the incorporation of the Ferrybank / Belview Framework Plan into Volume 3 of the KCCDP, by way of Variation (No. 6) of the statutory plan, was commenced.

Within the hierarchy of statutory plans, the Waterford City MASP area identified in the Southern Regional Assembly RSES extends into County Kilkenny and includes the Ferrybank / Belview area.

The Ferrybank / Belview Port area will continue to be developed in accordance with MASP as identified in the Core Strategy, as part of an agreed Waterford Metropolitan Strategy.

Figure 2-9: Waterford MASP Area - Extract from Kilkenny County Development Plan

For the Waterford MASP area, the Council will support the growth of Waterford city as the principal urban centre of the South-East and the Waterford MASP with the objective for the City to become an important driver of national growth and a 'Regional City of Scale' within a defined Metropolitan Area. The Council will assist in the implementation of the Waterford MASP by reviewing the Ferrybank/Belview Local Area Plan to be consistent with the RSES MASP in a timely manner and incorporating it into the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan by means of variation. The Council will also adopt and give effect to the guiding principles of the Waterford MASP as set out on page 320 of the RSES and stated in text above.

Objective

- 41 To commence the review of the Ferrybank/Belview Local Area Plan within 6 months of the coming into effect of this Plan having regard to the MASP and to incorporate into the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan by way of variation.**

In addition to the regional context, the KCCDP recognises the port as a significant economic facilitator with an important role to play in the economic development of the southeast and further afield. To fulfil its role the port needs to be positioned to deliver the infrastructure and capacity required of it in a timely manner. The KCCDP acknowledges the Port of Waterford Master Plan as setting out a strategic vision to position the port as the preferred cargo gateway for the southeast region.

Also noted is the significant industrial hinterland, including the IDA 55ha strategic industrial land bank and additional lands and facilities to support port activity identified in the master plan.

It is a policy for the Council:

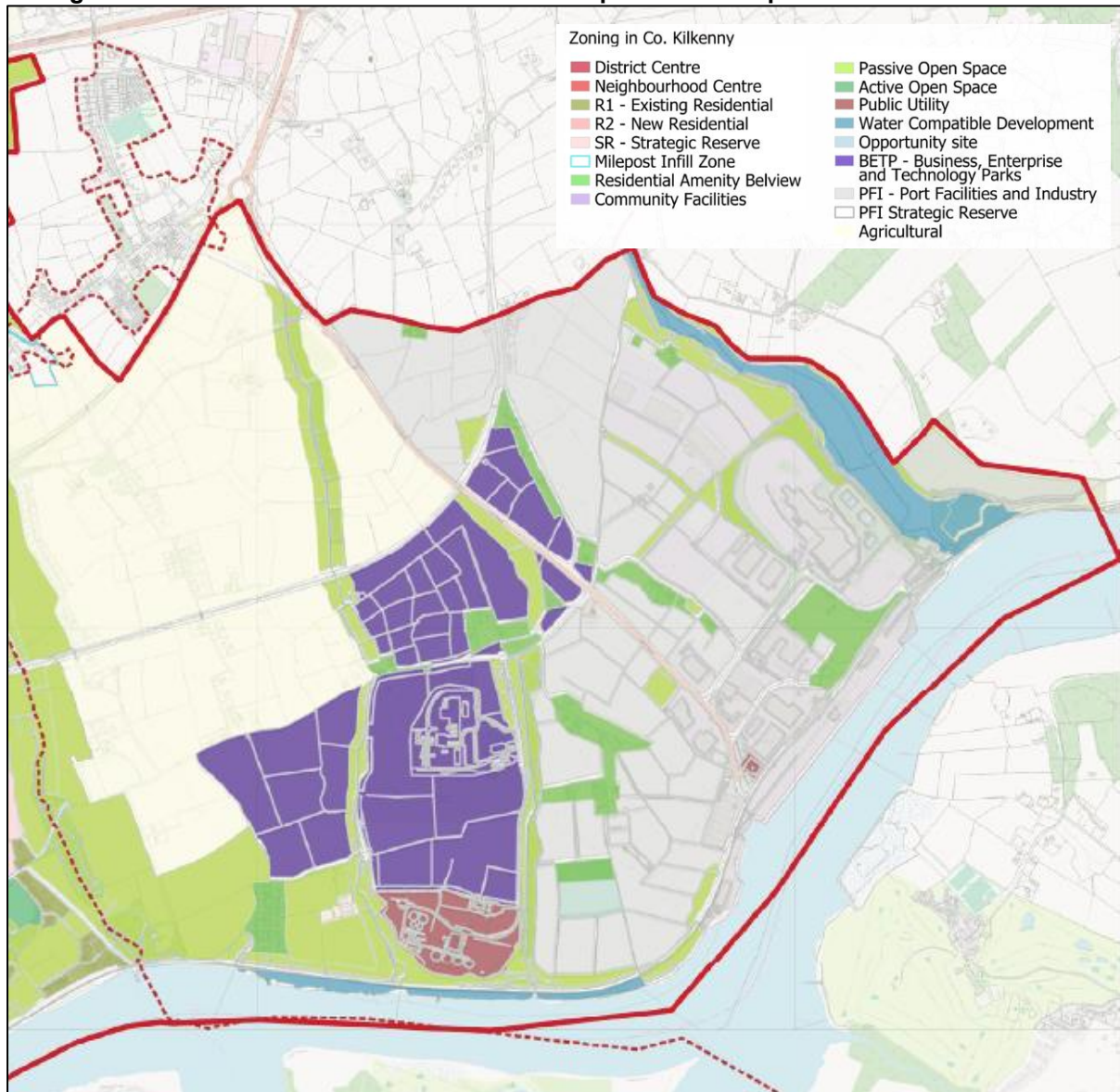
- To support the development of the necessary port infrastructure and associated road and rail connectivity required for the development of Belview Port, to enhance the role of the port as an economic driver subject to the outcome of appropriate appraisal, environmental assessments and the planning process; and,
- To support the Port of Waterford in the development of port facilities at Belview as outlined in its strategic Master Plan.

2.11.2.2 Ferrybank-Belview Framework Plan (Draft) – ('FBFP')

The majority of land within the site is zoned 'PFI: Development of port facilities and industry' in the FBFP [14]. The Proposed Development is considered to be a port-related use of land, which is compatible with the zoning objective for the area.

The proposed Biodiversity Enhancement Area is located on land zoned 'Water Compatible Development'.

Figure 2-10: Extract from FBFP Appendix 4 Zoning Map – PFI zoning shaded 'grey'. The ecological enhancement area is zoned 'Water Compatible Development'



Port Facilities and Industry ('PFI')

PFI Objective: To provide for light industry, technology and the expansion of port and ORE-related activity.

Permissible Uses: Car/Truck Park, industry (General Industrial use), Industry (Light), Port-related office, Construction Support, Data Centre, Operations and Maintenance facilities supporting the ORE industry open space, park and ride facility, silos and

storage areas, storage tanks including bulk liquid storage and general warehousing, wholesale / warehousing.

Open for consideration: Battery storage, electricity transmission infrastructure, Advertising board, ATM, buildings for the health, safety and welfare of the public, cafe, car repair / sales, childcare facilities, enterprise centre / campus industry, service / petrol station, recycling centre (bottle banks, etc), Shop - Convenience outlet, water-based recreational cultural activities.

Water Compatible Development ('WCD')

WCD Objective: To allow for water compatible development, passive open space and biodiversity conservation.

Permissible Uses: Essential public infrastructure; Flood control infrastructure; Water-based recreation and tourism (excluding sleeping accommodation); Lifeguard and coastguard stations; Amenity open space, outdoor sports and recreation and essential facilities such as changing rooms, expansion of existing uses subject to a Development Management Justification Test.

Open for Consideration: Docks, marinas and wharves; Navigation facilities; Ship building, repairing and dismantling, dockside fish processing and refrigeration and compatible activities requiring a waterside location. Extensions and expansions of existing uses will be considered on their own merits.

The FBFP seeks to position the Port of Waterford and the surrounding enterprise area at Belview to capitalise on the potential of the ORE sector. The Kilkenny CDP and the Waterford CDP identify Belview Port as being of strategic national, regional and county importance with good road and rail links, and as a strategic employment location.

Section 8.4 notes:

The Port of Waterford is currently developing infrastructure to facilitate the deployment of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) and has engaged with Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) to secure Maritime Area Consent and with An Bord Pleanála for permission to construct a 250 extension to the existing wharves at the Container / Bulk Handling Terminal.

This quay extension and the 2ha on quay storage will facilitate the servicing of ORE developments. This quay extension was identified as part of the Port of Waterford Masterplan 2020 – 2044 published in October 2020.

It is the ambition of the Port of Waterford to become a transactional ORE port for the South-East coast which will facilitate the Offshore renewable sector in terms of construction support, transportation of ORE components and the maintenance of offshore wind farms. This objective is supported by Kilkenny County Council.

Strategically, the FBFP additionally identifies opportunities to develop tourism capacity at the port and leveraging the area as a renewables hub with associated EirGrid infrastructure upgrades, making use of abundant renewable energy resources (8.5).

2.12 Conclusions of Planning Assessments

The expansion and diversification of the port related activities at Belview Port is supported at all hierarchy levels of national planning, including the marine area, regional, local and sectoral (spatial and economic) planning.

Since 2022, there has been an additional focus and urgency at a national level to advance ORE strategic infrastructure. The MAPA 2021 has been incorporated into the Planning and Development Act.

The preparation of the statutory SC-DMAP as a sub-national plan concentrating on ORE identified an overwhelming case for the ORE infrastructure to be situated off the South Coast of Ireland.

It is essential to get the National Ports, including Belview, ready to support national policy, including the stated Government policy included in the NPF 1st Revision and in the MSSP, both for 2025.

The Port of Waterford at Belview is ideally located to sustainably serve the development and operational maintenance of ORE infrastructure in the Irish and Celtic Sea sectors and has the capacity to serve an essential role in this strategic, nationally important offshore development area.

The envisaged expansion of the Port for all purposes as set out in the Port of Waterford Masterplan 2020 – 2044 is given recognition in the KCCDP. The subject site is zoned PFI in the FDFP KCDP Variation 2025.

The Proposed Development, subject to the necessary compliance with planning and environmental criteria, will enhance the ability of Belview Port to fulfil the strategic roles identified in the hierarchy of NPF, SRA-RSES and KCCDP statutory development plans.

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