

Planning Statement

Application by Shannon Foynes Port Company
to An Coimisiún Pleanála for

Acquisition Order.

Land at Foynes Island, Foynes, Co. Limerick.

July 2026



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Planning Statement has been prepared by HRA Chartered Town Planning and Environmental Consultants ("HRA Planning") on the instructions of Shannon Foynes Port Company ("**SFPC**") in support of its application to An Coimisiún Pleanála for an Acquisition Order seeking the compulsory acquisition of lands at Foynes Island, Co. Limerick under the relevant provisions of the Harbours Act, 1996.

The proposed Acquisition Order seeks the compulsory acquisition of four land parcels ("the subject lands") at Foynes Island, Co. Limerick, as identified in the accompanying **Book of Reference** and **Booklet of Maps** (outlined in purple and green on "CPO Map 1"). The acquisition is required to facilitate the implementation of SFPC's proposed scheme of development of its harbour at the Port of Foynes where in the opinion of SFPC, the delivery of this scheme would be impracticable without the compulsory acquisition of the subject lands and associated interests.

Shannon Foynes Port Company ("SFPC") of Harbour Office, Foynes, Co. Limerick, Ireland V94R232 is a company incorporated in Ireland on the 11th of September 2000 pursuant to Section 7 of the Harbours Act, 1996 and is the owner of the harbour property at Foynes Co Limerick and the wider Shannon estuary more particularly specified in paragraphs 7 and 10 of the Third Schedule to the Harbours Act, 1996 ("SFPC's Harbour").

The purpose of this Planning Statement is to describe the proposed scheme of development, identify the lands required for its implementation, and demonstrate the strategic planning justification for the proposed compulsory acquisition. The report assesses the proposal in the context of national, regional and local planning policy and should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Book of Reference and Booklet of Maps.

2.0 BACKGROUND CONTEXT & NEED for SCHEME OF DEVELOPMENT

2.1 SFPC Harbour

SFPC is Ireland's deepest sheltered commercial harbour and largest bulk port company with statutory jurisdiction over all marine activities on a 500km² area on the Shannon Estuary, stretching from Kerry to Loop Head to Limerick City. Located adjacent to the world's busiest shipping routes, with current capacity to handle over 10 million tonnes annually and with water depths of up to 32m, and, adjacent to the Atlantic ocean one of the world's best wind resources, SFPC is strategically positioned to support Ireland's long-term economic development, energy security, and climate objectives.

The Port of Foynes is the principal deepwater facility on the Shannon Estuary and one of Ireland's most important bulk ports, handling approximately 20% of national maritime cargo tonnage. It serves domestic, European, and global markets and functions as a critical gateway for agriculture, construction, energy, and industrial supply chains. Its deepwater location and sheltered conditions position the port as a nationally strategic asset for future trade and offshore renewable energy development. The port handles a diverse mix of bulk, break-bulk, agri-inputs, construction materials, fuels, and energy products across both directly managed and privately operated terminals.

The port accommodates vessels of over 200 metres in length, with draughts of up to 10.5 metres and capacities ranging from 3,000 to 60,000 dwt. Facilities include four operational berths, an additional berth at the east-west jetty, and a dedicated dolphin jetty for bulk liquids. Cargo handling is supported by mobile harbour cranes, bulk hoppers, open laydown areas, warehousing, and a privately operated fuel and chemical tank farm. Current infrastructure enables the handling of over 2 million tonnes annually.

Foynes benefits from direct access to the N69 National Road network and will be significantly enhanced by the approved Foynes–Limerick Road Scheme, including the Adare Bypass, improving journey times and reliability for freight. The port lies within a 2.5-hour drive of 75% of Ireland's GDP. The Foynes to Limerick road scheme commenced in 2024 and is scheduled for opening in 2030. The imminent completion of the reinstatement of the Foynes–Limerick rail line will enable large volumes of cargo to transfer to rail directly from the port, strengthening multimodal connectivity and supply-chain resilience.

Presently berthing at the Port of Foynes is confined to the inner port area consisting of the east and west jetties, and to the Western Harbour. Though the east and west jetties have been recently joined to facilitate additional berthing, operational and physical constraints still exist at the inner port area with berthing at the east and west jetties capped to vessels that do not exceed 10.5m draft and 200m in length and this inner harbour area cannot cater for the increasing global trend toward larger vessel size (Panamax and post-Panamax vessel class) upon which current and perspective port users are projected to become dependent on.

The existing inner port area and western harbour in Foynes are thus unable to accommodate increased berthage and/or deepwater berthage due to; existing operational capacity; the absence of sufficient depth of water at the quayside; and operational limitations and navigational and safety issues particularly the manoeuvrability requirements of Panamax and post-Panamax vessel classes between Barneen Point and Colleen Point at the Western Harbour which would impact other ship movements at the harbour. Furthermore, the existing inner port area does not have sufficient berthing quay or requisite landside area to facilitate the assembly and deployment of large-scale plant and equipment which is integral to offshore renewable energy projects.

2.2 SFPC Port Development Objectives - SFPC 'VISION 2041'

Published in 2013, SFPC's 30-year masterplan – 'Vision 2041' set out a 30-year port development strategy with the aim of providing the necessary port facilities capable of handling its projected growth of 20m tonnes by 2041.

To accommodate projected business growth, larger vessel classes, and the infrastructure needs of the Offshore Renewable Energy sector, Vision 2041 recognised that additional deepwater capacity is essential. To address predicted future growth and facilitation of ORE requirements, 'Vision 2041' included a development objective for the development of a new deep water berth at Foynes Island that would enable increased port operations at the Port of Foynes inner harbour through provision of increased quay wall with ability with naturally occurring deepwater at that location, to accommodate increased vessel size (with deeper draft) and, to provide for offshore renewable energy (ORE) integration services as that sector developed.

VISION 2041 Strategic Review (2022)

The VISION 2041 Strategic Review was published in 2022, to take into account shifting market, political and environmental circumstances since VISION 2041 was first publication in 2013.

The VISION 2041 Strategic Review outlines an updated growth strategy, noting that cargo handled across the Shannon Estuary approaches 11 million tonnes annually, generating an estimated €8.5 billion in trade value and €1.9 billion in wider economic impact, while supporting more than 3,900 jobs.

In the context of future port growth, Vision 2041 Strategic Review acknowledges the trend in global shipping toward larger vessels, consolidation of services, and rising demand for low-carbon logistics require port infrastructure of greater scale and depth. It refers to National forecasts which indicate significant growth in maritime freight and containerised trade over the next two decades. In parallel, Vision 2041 also recognises that climate policy and the transition to offshore renewable energy will reshape port activity on the Estuary, driving new cargo types and logistics requirements.

In response, the review articulates three key themes for future growth and expansion of the Port of Foynes, namely:

- expanded, diversified and more sustainable logistics services;
- delivery of floating offshore wind (FLOW) at scale; and
- facilitation of green industrial development and alternative fuels ("e-fuels") production.

The Strategic Review sets out updated anticipated growth projections of total throughput and general cargo throughput in the estuary projected to 2041 demonstrating a projected increase of between 1.5 million and 2 million tonnes increase above initial projections set out in VISION 2041 as shown below. The updated projections set out in the Vision 2041 Strategic Review are copied in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below.

	2021	2031	2041
Base Line	10,975,000	11,144,000	12,808,000
Mid Line	10,975,000	13,648,000	17,061,000
High Line	10,975,000	17,190,000	22,212,000

Figure 1 Updated Estuary Throughput Projections – Total (tons/yr)

	2021	2031	2041
Base Line	2,657,000	3,204,000	3,311,000
Mid Line	2,657,000	3,535,000	4,072,000
High Line	2,657,000	4,020,000	5,143,000

Figure 2 Updated General Cargo Projections (tons/yr)

Critically, the Vision 2041 Strategic Review reaffirms its support for the port development objective first established in Vision 2041 for a deep-water terminal on Foynes Island, recognising it as the most significant expansion of port capacity within the Shannon Estuary. The Strategic Review recognises the multifunctional potential of the deepwater terminal in increasing overall general cargo handling capacity by providing the required capacity to expand the general cargo and container business at the inner Port of Foynes while also facilitating offshore renewable wind energy projects that require quayside assembly and deployment space and that by doing so, would diversify the Estuary's cargo base and position it to align with Ireland's climate objectives.

The deepwater terminal is considered as a differentiated product for shipping merchants in the North Atlantic which can provide the scale, depth, and operational flexibility required to meet future throughput, support decarbonised supply chains, and secure the port's designation as a Tier 1 Port of National Significance utilising the naturally occurring sheltered deepwater asset of the Shannon

Estuary. From a practical perspective, the deepwater terminal will address infrastructure and capacity constraints at the inner harbour and to expand the container business to meet the projected mid-to-high line growth scenarios carried forward in the Vision 2041 Strategic Review. The deepwater terminal quay will be able to accommodate global shipping trend toward larger vessel size which exceed the vessel draught limits of 10.5m at the existing inner harbour. This includes Panamax and post-Panamax; maximum vessel draught (20+m); maximum draught at berth (20m); and maximum draught at channel (16.3m plus tide), and vessels from 3,000 to 200,000 dwt.¹

Complimented by the pending rail access (with the current upgrade/reinstatement of the Limerick-Foynes rail link) as well as the forthcoming Foynes To Limerick Road upgrade (including Adare bypass), VISION 2041 Strategic Review recognises the distinct opportunity of this deep-water terminal to contribute to decarbonisation of the national supply chain, enabling the only Panamax-ready terminal with rail access in Ireland to play a significant role in the Government's Climate Action Plan over the years to come.

In the context of current policy and technological advances since VISION 2041 was first published, The Strategic Review demonstrates how the deepwater terminal would also contribute toward the achievement of European and National climate action objectives, and specifically the National Climate Action Plan 2024 which sets out ambition renewable energy targets by 2030 and 2050 to be achieved through the accelerated delivery of offshore renewable (wind) energy development projects through realisation of Ireland enormous potential for offshore wind.

The deepwater port can contribute to the delivery of the critical supply chain for ORE through the provision of harbour related assembly, pre-commissioning and deployment quayside space and infrastructure upon which offshore renewable energy wind farm projects are dependent upon whilst optimising the naturally occurring sheltered deep water with channel depths of up to 32m; and close proximity to west coast wind resources.

In its multi-functional purpose (facilitating increased general cargo throughput and facilitation of ORE) the Strategic Review presents various ORE throughput scenarios with capacity ranging from 400 MW per year delivered from the Shannon Estuary – under a low development scenario of 10 GW by 2050, and 1,000 MW per year, - under a medium development scenario of 20 GW by 2050 as per the projects shown below.

¹ With Ireland's container demand projected to double by 2030, exceeding 2 million TEUs annually, the opportunity for Lo-Lo cargo handling at the deepwater terminal will relieve national congestion at Dublin and Cork ports with capability of handling 4% or more of TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent container national throughput and supporting long-term capacity needs and regional economic growth (Source: Vision 2041 Strategic Review September 2022).

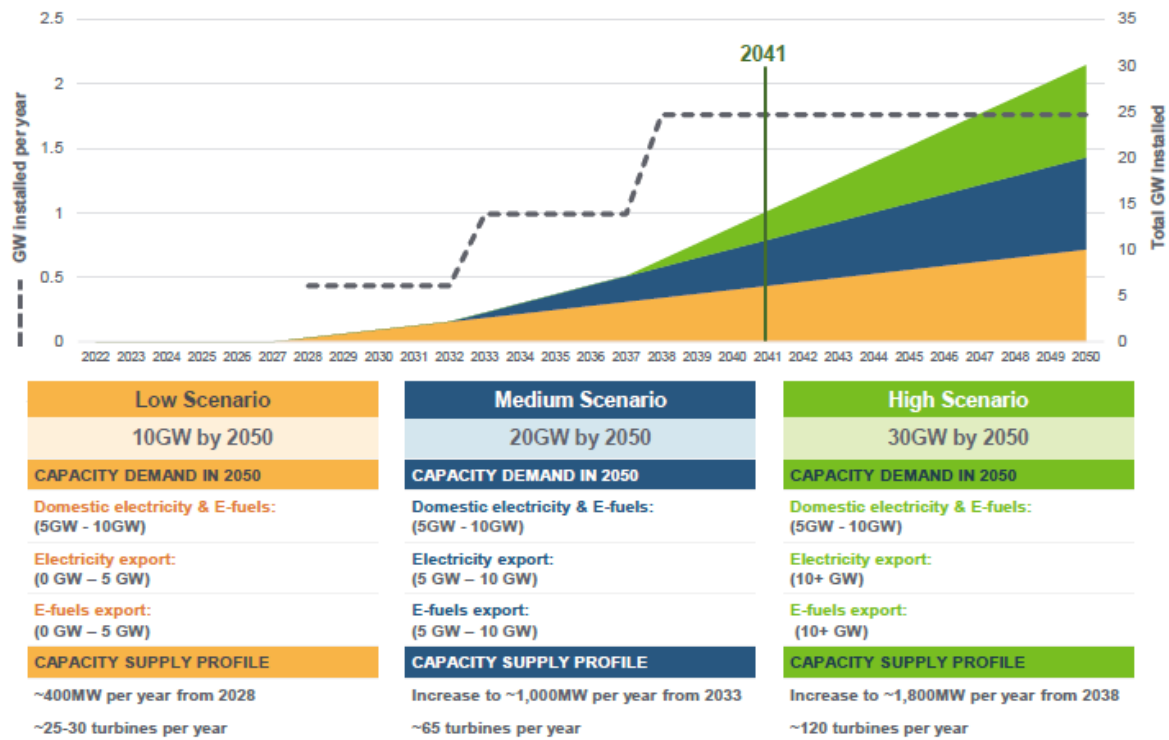


Figure 1 Copy of Figure 14 from VISION 2041 Strategic Review illustrating "Wind Power Generation Capacity Delivered by the Shannon Estuary – Scenarios for 2050"

2.3 The Need for The 'Scheme of Development'

The scheme of development is intended to provide increased capacity and port development of the harbour and is considered by VISION 2041 (including its Strategic Review) as the most important expansion of port capabilities for the Shannon Estuary and synergises with the established harbour activities and port operations enabling SFPC to respond to market demand, national climate objectives and the long-term economic needs of the region. This can be articulated as follows:

- Utilisation of the existing harbour in terms of its sheltered position, access to naturally occurring deepwater and associated road and rail infrastructure and connectivity;
- Address existing operational and physical constraints within the SFPC's inner harbour area in Foynes Harbour;
- Respond to evolving international shipping trends to facilitate the berthing of larger Panamax and post-Panamax vessels (exceeding 10.5m draft and 200m in length); and
- Provide space for an assembly, pre-commissioning and maintenance facilities to support anticipated offshore wind and renewable energy projects.

In preparing its plans to develop its Harbour, SFPC have identified the need for:

- a) vehicular access from its port area at Durnish Foynes, Co Limerick across Foynes Island to its proposed Deepwater Port; and
- b) deepwater berthing quay with lo-lo container terminal and general cargo facility; and
- c) a large open space to serve as an assembly and pre-commissioning base for the deployment and maintenance of offshore wind turbines and associated offshore large-scale plant and equipment which is integral to offshore renewable energy projects,

Currently, there is virtually no other land available to SFPC within the vicinity of its proposed Deepwater Port which can satisfy these needs and SFPC has identified its acquisition of the Subject Lands as essential to ensure the implementation of its scheme of development of its Harbour. Accordingly, the Subject Lands is required by SFPC as critical supporting infrastructure to ensure the implementation of its scheme of development.

2.4 The Role of Shannon Foynes Port Company

The role of Shannon Foynes Port Company, as Port Authority for the Shannon Estuary, is critical to the provision of the scheme of development and the delivery of large-scale port infrastructure including the facilitation of Offshore Renewable Energy given its statutory mandate.

SFPC has recently acquired a substantial landholding on Foynes Island to assist in the facilitation of the scheme of development.

This site acquisition reflects the Government's expectation in its National Ports Policy that ports of National Significance (Tier 1 ports) will lead the response to strategic port capacity requirements, together with the identification of Foynes Island as the preferred deepwater site in the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) and the Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce Report (2022). The policy context is presented in the subsequent sections. Without the scheme of development, the Port of Foynes will be constrained in its ability to achieve its potential under its remit as a strategic National Tier 1 port.

Figure 4 and 5 (overleaf) presents conceptual image of the Foynes Island deepwater terminal project which is set out and included in the Port Company's strategic Masterplan Vision 2041.

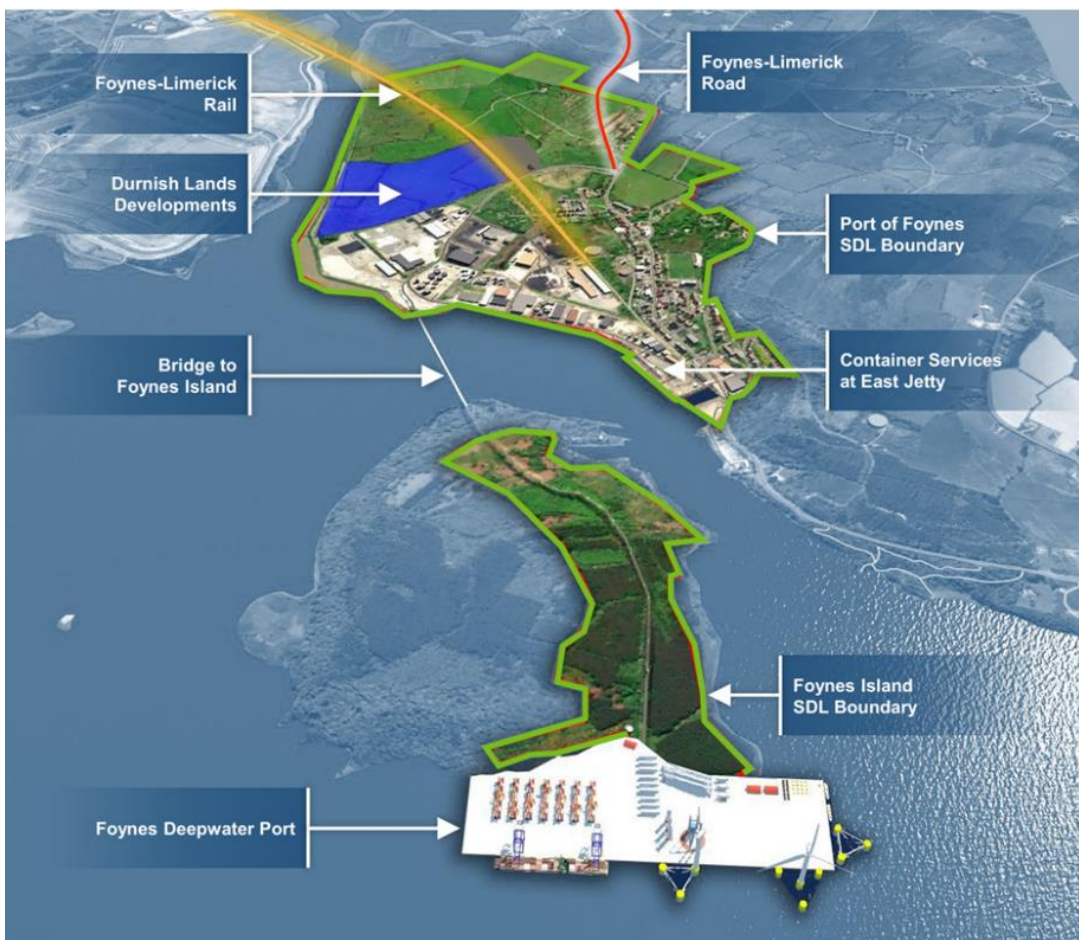


Figure 4 (top) and Figure 5 (below) Extract of Vision 2041 Figure 66: Port of Foynes, Rendering of Foynes Island port expansion.

3.0 SCHEME OF DEVELOPMENT

The Scheme of Development of its Harbour proposed by SFPC will comprise the following:

- (1) Construction of a new deep-water port terminal on Foynes Island including deepwater quay and associated port hard-standing areas behind the new quay to simultaneously accommodate both, new general cargo facilities including a new container terminal, storage areas; and a large area to facilitate the pre-commissioning, maintenance and/or deployment of offshore wind turbines and assembly and loading of large plant and equipment for offshore wind energy projects.

The new quay will measure circa 700m long by 60m wide. **The deep-water terminal is approximately 4.2 hectares in area** including the reclamation of approximately 12.5 hectares of foreshore as a hard-standing area.

- (2) Construction of a new road and bridge connecting the proposed deepwater port terminal at Foynes Island to the existing Port of Foynes at Durnish, Foynes, Co. Limerick. This will consist of:
 - (ii). Construction of a circa 650m long x 14.8m wide bridge structure connecting the south-east part of Foynes Island to the existing port estate on the mainland and,
 - (iii). Construction of a new port access road across the southern part of Foynes Island from the new bridge landing point on Foynes Island to the planned deepwater port terminal. The total length of this new road (including bridge) from the existing road on the mainland to the edge of the proposed hardstanding adjoining the proposed deepwater port terminal is 2,253m; and
 - (iv). Temporary construction works.

The bridge works will cover a total area of approx. 1.38 hectares, and once constructed, the bridge (supports) will occupy 0.96 hectares of the Maritime Area.

- (3) Associated site-investigation works, site-development and temporary works including capital dredging in an area to the northeast of the new deepwater port terminal to a minimum depth of -17mCD to facilitate the new deepwater berth with an estimated dredge volume of approximately 45,000m³ over a maritime area of approx. 1.5 hectares.

The Subject Lands are required by SFPC for the construction and operation of a hardstanding storage and assembly area adjacent to the proposed new deep-water port terminal and for the construction of a critical part of the new port access road on Foynes Island, each of which are facilities and infrastructure necessary to ensure the implementation of its scheme of development referred to earlier under part “(1)” and part “(2)” of this statement. The Subject Lands are situated on land designated as a ‘Strategic Development Location’ (“SDL”) in the current development plan for the area – The Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 and in the multi-jurisdictional ‘Shannon Integrated Framework Plan’ (“SIFP”) for the purpose of port development on Foynes Island.

4.0 SUBJECT LAND To Be ACQUIRED

The subject Lands to be acquired comprise a total of 18.64 hectares in four separate plots as referenced in the **Book of Reference** and illustrated in **Booklet of Maps - “CPO Map 1”** as follows.

Map ref:	Land to be Acquired	Area (Ha)
Plot 1	Freehold	3.70
Plot 2	Freehold	10.10
Plot 3	Leasehold	4.40
Plot 4	Leasehold	0.440
TOTAL		18.64

The Subject Lands to be acquired on Foynes Island are, in part, situated within an area designated as a ‘Strategic Development Location’ (“**SDL**”) in the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (“SIFP”) for the Shannon Estuary - a 30-year, inter-jurisdictional plan launched in 2013 and led by Clare, Limerick, and Kerry County Councils with Shannon Foynes Port Company, to guide sustainable development and economic growth in the Shannon Estuary through marine industry, renewable energy, and tourism while protecting the natural environment. The Foynes Island SDL was purposely designated in the SIFP for deepwater port development and port expansion of the Port of Foynes.

The Foynes Island ‘SDL’ designation and function have been adopted and set out within the current Development Plan for the area – The Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 (“**the Development Plan**”). This designation in the Development Plan is supported and accompanied by several development plan objectives that support the ongoing infrastructure upgrades within the port of Foynes including, expressly, the “new deep-water berth at Foynes Island”. The Foynes island SDL is included in the development plan under “Map 5.4 Map of Foynes Island” which is illustrated in Figure 6 below for reference.

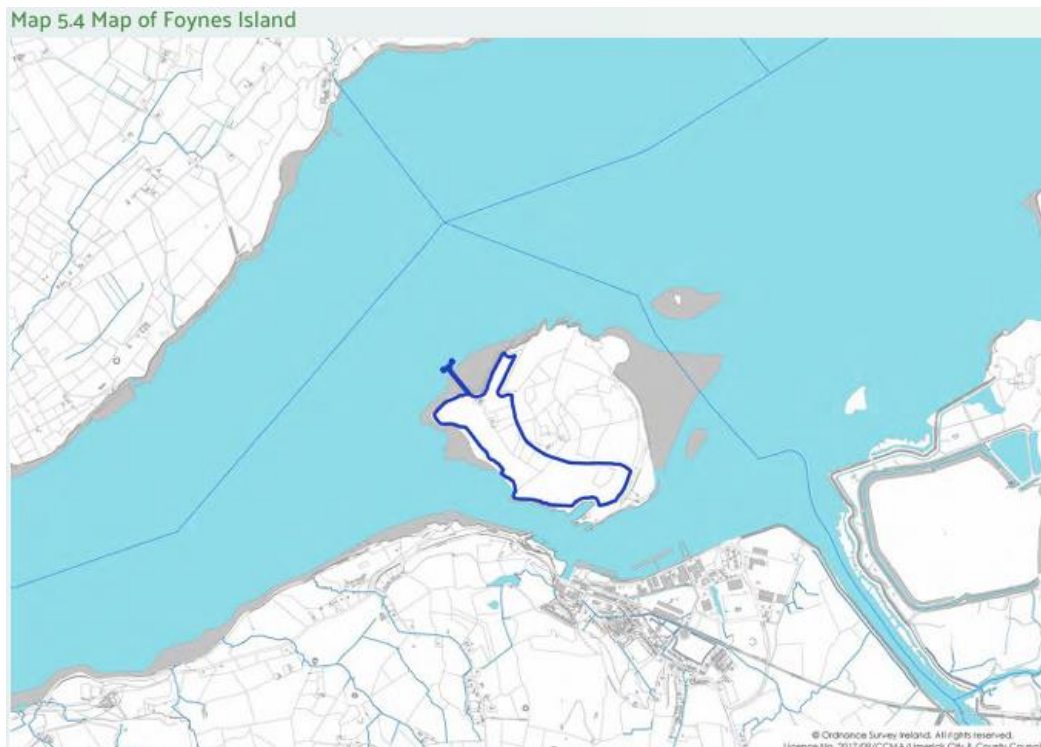


Figure 6: Copy of “Map 5.4” from the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 illustrating the Foynes Island designated ‘SDL’ site (outlined in blue)

The general position of the proposed scheme of development relative to the Foynes Island Strategic Development Location (SDL) is illustrated in Figure 7 below.

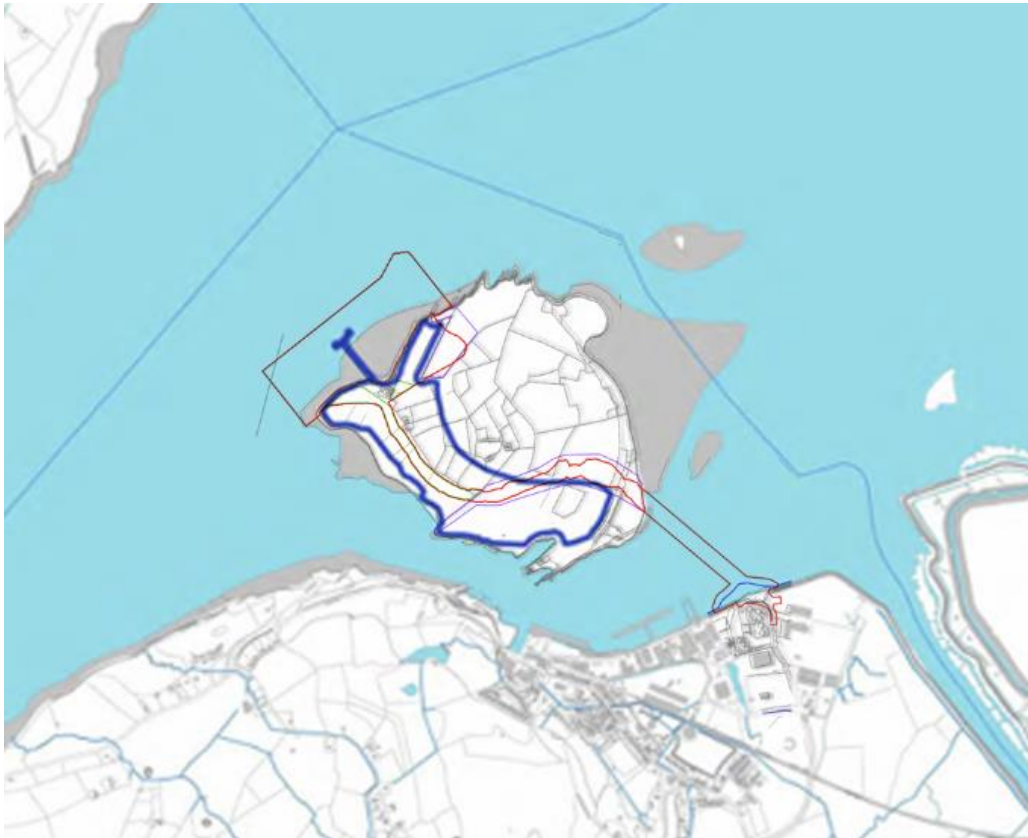


Figure 7: General position of the scheme of development relative to the Foynes Island designated 'SDL' site (outlined in blue)

It is relevant to note that when the Foynes Island Strategic Development Location (SDL) was first identified in the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) and subsequently incorporated into the current Development Plan, it was not based on a detailed design for a deep-water terminal or on the physical constraints of the island established through topographical or hydrographic survey work, which had not yet been undertaken.

Rather, the SDL boundary reflected the strategic intention to facilitate the development of a deep-water terminal on the western side of Foynes Island, where direct access to deep water exists, in order to support the future growth and expansion of SFPC's harbour. It also anticipated a physical connection (bridge) to the existing Port of Foynes from the eastern side of the island, this being the closest point to the mainland and the location that would minimise interference with existing port operations within the inner harbour.

Accordingly, SFPC considers that the proposed scheme of development accords with the strategic intent of the SDL designation and is consistent, insofar as is reasonably practicable, with the SDL boundary identified in the SIFP and subsequently incorporated into the Development Plan.

5.0 NATIONAL POLICY & PROGRAMMES

Significant policy at international and national level supports the future growth of the Port of Foynes and the development of a deepwater port terminal on Foynes Island. This is set out under the existing hierarchy of port and development policy and programmes at European, national, regional and the local level in respect to inter-alia; national economic development, port development, terrestrial and marine spatial development, climate action and renewable energy development and site-specific port development objectives.

A brief synopsis of this policy context is presented below with an appraisal set out in Section 5.5.

5.1 EUROPEAN POLICY

5.1.1 Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)

At a European level the Port of Foynes is recognised as a **Core Port** on the European Union's (EU) trans-European transport network (TEN-T) and is on the TEN-T **Atlantic** and **North South Rhine Mediterranean** Corridors. The EU's trans-European transport network policy.

The EU TEN-T policy is a key instrument for planning and developing a coherent, efficient, multimodal, and high-quality transport infrastructure across the EU comprising railways, inland waterways, shipping routes and roads linking urban nodes, maritime and inland ports, airports and terminals intended to strengthen the EU's economic, social and territorial cohesion and create seamless transport systems across borders, without gaps, bottlenecks or missing links².

The Ten-T recognises that European ports are critical gateways for trade and connectivity - handling 74% of EU goods, supporting millions of jobs, and serving as strategic hubs for conventional and offshore renewable energy³, and, that continued development through the TEN-T network is essential to remove bottlenecks, strengthen competitiveness, and enable sustainable growth across Europe's maritime regions.

Identification of Shannon Foynes Port as a core port in the Ten-T network is significant as it provides a framework for future development and funding mechanisms. It effectively supports its growth and expansion at an international level. SFPC has received initial funding from the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for Transport fund towards a feasibility study for the new deep-water berth at Foynes Island.

5.1.2 Renewable Energy Directive III

The Renewable Energy Directive (EU/2023/2413) ("RED III") is the second revision of this Directive relating to the promotion of energy from renewable sources. RED III is designed to reflect the more ambitious goals of the 2030 climate and energy establishes an overall renewable energy binding target of at least 42.5% at EU level by 2030- but aiming for 45%. The Directive establishes a common system to promote energy from renewable sources across all sectors of the EU economy, supporting cooperation between EU countries towards this goal.

² European Commission 2026 https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/infrastructure-and-investment/trans-european-transport-network-ten-t_en

³ European Commission 2026 https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-modes/maritime/ports_en

The targets set out in RED III has directly informed the Government strategy – ‘Ireland’s Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy’ which is designed to complement the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement with a strategic approach to harnessing Ireland’s green industrial development potential arising from offshore wind energy- specifically the delivery of 37GW of offshore wind by 2050 - which will enable the achievement of National climate targets, and significantly enhance Ireland’s global competitiveness.

The intent, ambition and targets of the Renewable Energy Directive are reflected in National policy relating to climate action and offshore renewable energy development.

5.2 NATIONAL POLICY & PROGRAMMES

5.2.1 National Ports Policy 2013 – 2026

The National Ports Policy published by the Department of Transport, Tourism, and Sport in 2013 presents detailed and descriptive policy categorising Ireland’s commercial ports in the context of the crucial role that the maritime transport sector plays to the economy and the EU TEN-T transportation network, whilst addressing corporate governance and environmental issues.

As Ireland’s second largest port in terms of total throughput/trade handled and its access to deep-water resources, SFPC is designated by the Government in the National Ports Policy as a **‘Tier 1 Port of National Significance’**. This means that the port must continue to play a key role, both regionally and nationally, in meeting the external trading requirements of the Irish economy, and that the continued successful commercial development of the port represents a key policy objective in this regard. The National Ports Policy states,

“The continued commercial development of Shannon Foynes Port Company is a key strategic objective of National Ports Policy” and

“It is the Government’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.”

This policy implies that the Tier 1 Ports of National Significance, including Shannon Foynes Port, will lead the response of the State commercial ports sector in addressing the future national port capacity requirements and, the role that ports can play in servicing the offshore energy sector and the need for further port capacity in this area.

Public consultation on the revised National Ports Policy (July 2026)

The draft National Ports Policy 2026 strongly reinforces the strategic role of Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC) as a key national gateway, reaffirming its status as one of Ireland’s Ports of National Significance and recognising its central role in delivering future port capacity, trade resilience and offshore renewable energy (ORE) infrastructure.

Building on the National Ports Policy 2013, under which Shannon Foynes was designated a Tier 1 Port of National Significance, the proposed revised policy confirms that Ports of National

Significance will lead the development of future commercial port capacity and support Ireland's transition to net zero while facilitating regional economic growth.

The policy also highlights Shannon Foynes' position on the TEN-T Core Network, recognising its strategic importance for European connectivity and eligibility for EU infrastructure funding. It notes the requirement for core ports to have integrated road and rail connectivity, reinforcing the significance of the restored rail connection to Foynes and the N69 Limerick–Foynes road upgrade which is under construction in strengthening multimodal access, freight efficiency, ORE deployment and regional economic development.

5.2.2 Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework & Revised National Development Plan 2021–2030

Project Ireland 2040 (PI2040) includes: The National Planning Framework (“NPF”) which sets out an overarching spatial strategy for the next 20 years; and The National Development Plan (“NDP”) which sets out a ten-year investment strategy.

Whilst the NPF sets out a spatial hierarchy of urban centres that are programmed for significant population and economic growth over the plan period, the NDP sets out funding to underpin key Government priorities including measures to enable a step-change in investment to ameliorate the effects of climate change.

The alignment of the NPF and the NDP is expected to be achieved through delivery of National Strategic Outcomes (NSO's) set out in the NDP. Reference is made to National Strategic Outcome **NSO 8 ‘Transition to Sustainable Energy’**, where the NPF states that:

“the development of onshore and offshore renewable energy is critically dependent on the development of enabling infrastructure including grid facilities to bring the energy ashore and connect to major sources of energy demand. We also need to ensure more geographically focused renewables investment.....”

Further to that, the NDP recognises that:

“Ireland's ORE ambitions will entail investment of tens of billions of euros and development of indigenous supply chains and port infrastructure. The significant role for ports, and need for associated infrastructure development in Irish ORE development is recognised”.

(bold emphasis added)

5.2.3 National Marine Planning Framework 2021

Published in 2021, the National Marine Planning Framework (“NMPF”) sets out the first national framework of the Government for managing marine activities to provide for a more strategic, planned and efficient use of marine resources.

The NMPF supports the establishment of Ireland as a world leader in offshore renewable energy deployment, highlighting the importance of offshore renewable energy in Ireland's decarbonisation

journey through a number of specific policies. Relevant objectives contained within the NMPF to the scheme of development include:

ORE Policy 1

“Proposals that assist the State in meeting the Government’s offshore renewable energy targets, including the target of achieving 5GW of capacity in offshore wind by 2030 and proposals that maximise the long-term shift from use of fossil fuels to renewable electricity energy, in line with decarbonisation targets, should be supported....”.

ORE Policy 11

“Where appropriate, proposals that enable the provision of emerging renewable energy technologies and associated supply chains will be supported”

ORE Policy 10

“Opportunities for land-based, coastal infrastructure that is critical to and supports development of ORE should be prioritised in plans and policies, where possible”.

The NMPF further recognises the critical function of ports, stating;

“Ports can support the growth of other marine activities such as offshore renewable energy, including emerging technologies such as floating offshore wind, through the provision of support services and facilities including for import and export of equipment and for vessels supporting the industry”.

5.2.4 Policy Statement on the Facilitation of Offshore Renewable Energy by Commercial Ports in Ireland, 2021

Pending the current review of ‘The National Ports Policy 2013’ , the Department in conjunction with the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO), carried out an assessment of the options for Irish commercial State Ports to facilitate the ORE sector and assist in Ireland achieving its emission reduction targets. The Policy statement recognises the significant role existing ports including SFPC can play in providing the required largescale port infrastructure required for deployment of ORE in the optimal areas that will be identified in the OREDPII including deepwater located off the southwest coast of Ireland.

5.2.5 Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPII) & OREDPII (Draft 2023)

First published in 2014, the second iteration, “OREDPII” (currently in draft form, 2023), sets out a high-level spatial framework for the long-term, sustainable and plan-led development of Ireland’s significant wind, wave and tidal energy resources. Its purpose is to support national climate objectives, alongside the co-existence approach established in the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF).

In this context, SFPC has already engaged with the Department on the draft OREDPII. As a Tier 1 Port of National Significance, SFPC has highlighted the need for greater alignment between the spatial strategy in OREDPII and terrestrial planning policy (including the National Ports Policy, the National Planning Framework, and regional and local development objectives). It has also emphasised the importance of recognising, in the final OREDPII, the location, capacity and development potential of

existing port infrastructure, and the role of Tier 1 ports, including SFPC, in facilitating offshore renewable energy.

5.2.6 Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce 2023

In April 2022 (under the Programme for Government 2020), this independent Taskforce was established to evaluate the economic development potential of the Shannon Estuary area, and to determine how this potential can be realised in both an economically and environmentally sustainable way.

The taskforce took into consideration: the strategic location with access to offshore renewable energy; the natural assets of its deep sheltered water; the European Commission's 'Green Deal' programme to accelerate decarbonisation of the EU Energy supply and greater energy self-sufficiency (referred to in Section 2.2 of this report); and the Government's Climate Action Plan to deliver up to 30GW of Atlantic Offshore Wind through the Estuary by 2050.

It is within this context that the taskforce report has identified what it describes as 'the single greatest opportunity for sustainable economic growth in Ireland's history – the development of one of the world's largest renewable energy hubs, built primarily around the harnessing of global scale offshore wind energy from the Shannon Estuary'.

Among the key recommendations is the provision of physical infrastructure development at scale to realise this objective within a regional, national and European context.

5.2.7 Climate Action Plan (2024)'CAP24'

Climate Action Plan 2024 is the third annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan setting out the Government's roadmap to deliver on Ireland's climate commitment to a transition to clean energy. Climate Action plans thus far have outlined goals for renewable energy development. CAP 24 sets a precise key target of at least 5GW of electricity generated by Offshore wind development alone by 2030 as part of a transformational approach to increase renewable energy generation to supply 80% by that date.

To achieve this, CAP24 identifies and supports the accelerated expansion of ORE development through realisation of Ireland enormous potential for offshore wind. To this end, the Plan promotes; the innovation, development and deployment of offshore wind energy and other ocean technologies as one of several solutions towards Irelands transition to climate neutrality by; amongst other things, transforming our traditional energy generation systems, decarbonising our industry and working toward a circular and bio-based economy. At the same time CAP24 recognises that the maritime and port sector infrastructure through the plan-led system and specifically the Maritime Area Panning Act 2021 ('MAP') and the Marine Area Consent ('MAC') process, and in tandem with the conservation and protection of marine biodiversity "*will be central*" to the immediate delivery of Irelands national ORE target of 7GW and the projected longer term objective of 37GW by 2050 from ORE projects.

5.2.8 Future Framework for Offshore Renewable Energy Policy Statement 2024

The Future Framework is an overarching long-term framework for the delivery of ORE. The Framework, which sets out a number of key actions, future directions and intergovernmental dependencies that will be addressed through subsequent policy to develop and initiate the long-term, plan-led approach to Ireland's ORE future, is aligned with and complementary to Ireland's existing climate, renewable energy and ORE policy and legislative frameworks.

This framework recognises port facilities as a physical component to deliver the extensive resources necessary to support the ORE system if the full potential of ORE at a national level is to be realised and it acknowledges the reference in the National Ports Policy 2013 to the important role of commercial state ports in serving ORE. Further to that, the Framework recognises efficiency with aligning infrastructure, to enable ORE projects by, *inter-alia*, proximity and year-round access to port facilities “*capable of building, storing and transporting components as well as proximity for ongoing O&M (operation and maintenance) activities*”.

5.3 REGIONAL GOVERNMENT POLICY & PROGRAMMES

5.3.1 The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region 2019 – 2031

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) is a twelve-year strategic regional plan that provides a framework for investment to better manage spatial planning and economic development to sustainably grow the Southern Region to 2031 and beyond. The RSES identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs).

In full acknowledgement that the region is particularly rich in renewable energy resources, and consistent with National policy and programmes (to achieve climate change emission reduction targets), the RSES identifies the marine economy as an emerging sector (**Objective RPO76**) with the Shannon Estuary, its ports and future development identified as a significant economic driver and transport corridor in the region.

The RSES supports the continued and future development of SFPC. This is expressly provided for in Section 6.3.4.2 of the RSES with a number of Regional Policy Objectives (RPO's) supporting the Region's strategic ports and harbour assets including the Port of Foynes and Foynes Island for that use. For example:

RPO 99 states that:

“it is an objective to support the sustainable development of renewable wind energy (on shore and off shore) at appropriate locations and related grid infrastructure in the Region in compliance with national Wind Energy Guidelines”;

RPO100 states that:

“it is an objective to support the integration of indigenous renewable energy production and grid injection”; and

RPO146 provides continued support for the capital infrastructure projects in SFPC's Infrastructure Development Programme including specifically; capacity extension works and infrastructure investment towards deep water berthage on Foynes Island and offshore resources.

5.4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY & PROGRAMMES

This section refers to relevant local government policies contained in a number of statutory 'Development Plans' prepared by the relevant 'Coastal Planning Authorities' whose remit extends to include not just that of Limerick city and County Council in respect to the Port of Foynes but, with jurisdiction along both north and south sides of the Shannon Estuary.

In advance of consideration to those individuals policies, reference is made to the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary ('SIFP') prepared with input from those Coastal Planning Authorities and where the spatial development strategy of those authorities for their respective counties has been informed by that Plan.

5.4.1 Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary (SIFP)

The Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) was the first inter-jurisdictional framework plan prepared for the Shannon Estuary. The SIFP provides a coherent spatial plan to recognise the economic potential of the Estuary (including facilitation of off-shore renewable energy development) and aims to support the multifunctional nature of the Shannon Estuary and facilitate diversification of the economy through the promotion of commercial/industrial employment and maritime energy over a thirty-year horizon.

The SIFP seeks to transform the estuary into an international economic hub by taking advantage of what are among the deepest and most sheltered harbours in Europe and the world. It has identified an additional 1,200 hectares for port development in the form of 9 no. strategic development locations ('SDLs') by building on existing industry connectivity and synergy as well as the existing infrastructure to create more sustainable and attractive network for further investment. These SDL sites (which include Foynes Island) are defined in the SIFP as unique national maritime assets adjoining sheltered deep-water (>15m depths) in the Shannon Estuary with the intention to attract substantial maritime commerce consistent with the Governments national renewal energy and climate targets. The SIFP is significant in the spatial policy hierarchy given that it has 'buy in' from all relevant stakeholders and policy makers including the local (Coastal) Planning Authorities along both sides of the Shannon Estuary.

The SIFP has been formally recognised in statutory County Development Plans prepared by those Coastal Planning Authorities and is still relevant today.

5.4.2 Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028

The Limerick Development Plan ('Limerick DP') is underpinned by a strategic vision intended to guide the sustainable future growth of Limerick City and County. The Limerick DP has been informed by a number of strategies including the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary.

The Limerick DP includes several policies and objectives directly relevant to port development and that supports development in the Port of Foynes, Foynes Island and within the wider Shannon Estuary and to promote and facilitate ORE development.

Section 5.11 of Chapter 5, Section 4 of the Limerick DP – dealing with ‘Marine Economy’ - recognises the marine economy as an emerging sector, and the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) supports its transformation into an international economic hub, identifying substantial lands for marine development and building on existing infrastructure and industry strengths. This section recognises Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC), a port of national and international significance, and its Vision 2041 strategy to substantially increase port capacity and throughput, and that central to achieving this growth is the development of a new deep-water berth at Foynes Island, alongside associated infrastructure upgrades (jetty expansion, rail reinstatement, and road improvements). This recognition is supported by several Limerick DP objectives including;

“Objective ECON O55 – *It is an objective of the Council to encourage, facilitate and promote the Shannon Estuary’s economic growth potential and promote marine related industrial development, while ensuring that the environment and natural resources of the area are protected, managed and enhanced”.*

“Objective ECON O56 – Strategic Integrated Framework Plan

It is an objective of the Council to support and facilitate the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary”.

“Objective ECON O57 – *It is an objective of the Council to: safeguard the Strategic Development Locations at Foynes Port, Foynes Island and Aughinish Island for the sustainable growth and development of marine related industry and industrial development at Askeaton”*

“Objective ECON O58 - *It is an objective of the Council to:*

- a) *Support the expansion of the Port at Foynes and promote the economic and industrial development of the Shannon Estuary as a strategic transport, energy and logistics Hub, serving Limerick and the wider region by utilising naturally occurring deep water characteristics and by identifying and safeguarding existing and future strategic transportation links, subject to fulfilling the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the conservation objectives of the Lower River Shannon SAC site.*
- b) *Promote and support Shannon Foynes Port Company’s Masterplan Vision 2041”*

“Objective ECON O59 - *It is an objective of the Council to:*

- a) *Support in conjunction with other relevant agencies, wind energy initiatives, both on-shore and offshore and wave energy, when these are undertaken in an environmentally acceptable manner.*
- b) *Promote Limerick to become the primary hub for the development of Ireland’s west coast renewable energy, with potential in research, innovation, logistics, development, maintenance and administration”.*

5.4.3 Clare County Development Plan 2023-229

In recognition of the Shannon Estuary as a natural asset of international importance and economic development potential, The Clare County Development Plan ('Clare CDP') includes a series of strategic goals and policy objectives that builds on the strategic location and natural resources of the Estuary within the region. This includes:

- Policy CDP6.10 and Policy CDP12.1 which set out the objective of the Council to: *"proactively implement the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary" (the 'SIFP' referred to previously);*
- Policy CDP12.4 where it is the objective to safeguard the role of the 'SDL' sites identified in the SIFP for economic development (in a sustainable and environmental responsible manner; and,
- Policy CDP12.8 where it is the objective *To ensure that the Shannon Estuary fulfils its optimum role in contributing to the diversity and security of energy supply including renewable energy acknowledging that the Shannon Estuary is well placed to capture a significant share of the renewal energy market and to become a focal point for the offshore wind industry in Europe.*

5.4.4 Kerry County Development Plan 2023-229

In land use planning for the economic development of County Kerry, The Kerry County Development Plan ('Kerry CDP') acknowledges the SIFP and the hierarchy of plans and programmes of Government including Project Ireland 2040, the Climate Action Plan and the RSES in setting out ambitious plans for offshore renewable energy development. The Kerry CDP also recognises the significant opportunities of the Shannon Estuary as an 'Energy Hub', the marine sector and its ports (including the Port of Foynes) as strategic ports to grow offshore wave and wind renewable energy within the Shannon Estuary reflecting the key natural assets of wave and wind energy, together with the presence of grid connections. The Plan includes relevant objectives including:

- *Policy KCDP9-23 which supports the development of the 'SDLs' in the Shannon Estuary as advocated in the SIFP*
- *Policy KCDP 9-86 which supports the National Marine Planning Framework, the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA)2014 and its successors in the progressive sustainable development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy potential.*
- *Policy KCDP 9-87 to support the sustainable development of land-based, coastal infrastructure that is critical to and supports development of Offshore Renewable Energy, including the sustainable development of port infrastructure to service such developments.*

5.5 POLICY & PROGRAMME APPRAISAL

The policies and programmes referred to above establish a clear and coherent plan-led hierarchical framework, extending from European and national policy through to regional and local planning policy. Collectively, this framework emphasises the central role of Tier 1 Ports of National Significance including SFPC in facilitating increased port capacity to perform its strategic traditional economic function and to support the deployment of offshore renewable energy in meeting national and European climate and renewable energy targets for 2030 and 2050.

The proposed scheme of development gives practical effect to this policy framework by provision of strategically important port infrastructure necessary to achieve those objectives. The scheme of development will enable a significant increase in port capacity within SFPC's Harbour and provide the large-scale infrastructure necessary to support the delivery of offshore renewable energy projects envisaged for its harbour within the immediate timescale envisaged within the current policy framework.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Having regard to the strategic development objectives for the Port as set out in Vision 2041 (as updated by the VISION 2041 Strategic Review completed in 2022) and supported by the SFPC Business Case, there is a clear and demonstrable need for increased port capacity within SFPC's Harbour to meet economic growth projections of the harbour and strategic functions as a designated Tier 1 port of National Significance.

The scheme of development is intended to enable SFPC to provide that increased port capacity of its harbour at the Port of Foynes through the provision of a multipurpose deepwater terminal (and complementary infrastructure) on Foynes Island. The deepwater terminal will provide for the increased handling in general cargo throughput and make the Port of Foynes the only panamax capable port with rail connectivity in the State. Simultaneously, the scheme of development will provide essential port infrastructure necessary for the assembly, pre-commissioning and deployment of offshore renewable energy projects to meet strategic climate action and offshore renewable energy generation development set by the Government. The scheme of development and its location is supported by relevant European, national, regional and local policy frameworks and is consistent with the established plan-led spatial and marine policy hierarchy governing the Shannon Estuary and the ports sector in the State.

In this context, the Port Company is satisfied that the Subject Lands, due to their location adjacent to the existing port and the strategic development location ('SDL') designation for the specific purpose of providing deepwater terminal to facilitate increased port capacity at SFPC's harbour, are essential to ensure the implementation of the scheme of development.

Without the acquisition of the Subject Lands by the Port Company, the scheme of development cannot be delivered in a coherent or effective manner by the Port Company and the realisation of SFPC's strategic objectives for the provision of increased capacity at SFPC's harbour would be rendered impracticable. The acquisition is therefore necessary to enable the delivery of critical port infrastructure of strategic importance in the public interest.