



SOUTHERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY REGIONAL ACTION PLAN

Regional Action Plan to boost renewable energy investment in the Southern Region through the use of innovative financial instruments

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Glossary of Terms

Acronym	Meaning
3CEA	Three Counties Energy Agency
AGENEX	Agencia Extremeña de la Energía
ASSEMBLY	Southern Regional Assembly
CARO's	Climate Action Regional Offices
DCCAE	Department of Communication, Climate Action & Environment
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
GHG	Green House Gases
MA	Managing Authority
NDP	National Development Plan
NEEAP	National Energy Efficiency Action Plan
NPF	National Planning Framework
NREAP	National Renewable Energy Action Plan
RES	Renewable Energy Solution
RPO	Regional Policy Objective
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
RRES	Regional Renewable Energy Strategy
SEROP	Southern & Eastern Regional Operational Programme
UN	United Nations

Part 1: General Information

1.1 General information


Project	FIRESPOL - Financial Instruments for Renewable Energy Investment
Partner organisation(s) involved	Southern Regional Assembly (Assembly) – EU Programmes and Corporate Affairs Division
Description	<p>The Assembly is part of the regional tier of governance in Ireland with a remit for the Southern Region of Ireland. The Assembly has a role in linking local with national policy goals through regional planning. The Assembly also has a remit for the promotion and support for balanced regional development through the management of European Union (EU) programmes under the European Structural & Investment Funds. The Assembly is the Managing Authority (MA) for the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 (SEROP).</p> 
Country	Ireland
NUTS2 region	Southern Region
Contact person	David Kelly
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Table 1.1: General information

1.2 Primary Policy Stakeholder

Name of stakeholder	Southern Regional Assembly (Assembly) – Planning Division
Type of stakeholder	Regional Planning and Development
Description	<p>The Assembly has a role in linking local with national policy goals through regional planning. The Assembly's role in regional planning includes responsibility for the development and implementation of a Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region¹. The RSES was published in January 2020. It sets out a statutory 12-year strategic development framework for the Southern Region identifying key priorities for investment. The overarching purpose of the RSES is to support the programme for change set out in Project Ireland 2040 (the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP)), to support Government economic policies and to ensure coordination of planning and development policy matters in the region.</p> <p>The RSES affirms the commitment of the Southern Region to the implementation of the policy of Government under Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030 and Climate Action Plan 2019. The RSES includes ten Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) for Renewable Energy Generation and Storage, including an objective to support the development of a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy (RRES) with relevant stakeholders.</p>
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	<p>The Planning Division became increasingly involved as stakeholders as the project progressed as it became more apparent that learning from the project had the potential to improve the governance of the RSES as a policy instrument. The governance and implementation of the RSES, in particular, the development of a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy, offer the potential to promote innovative RES grants or financial instruments, through relevant goal setting and effective monitoring.</p> <p><i>"The implementation phase of delivering the RSES will focus on policies, actions and investment programmes to deliver the Regional Strategic Outcomes. The Regional Assembly will construct a full implementation plan for the RSES with clear time bound progress indicators and transparent reporting milestones with the involvement of key stakeholders from the Region²."</i></p> <p>Investment is key to delivering the objectives of the RSES and this will be achieved through a variety of funding sources, including but not limited to future ERDF co-funded Operational Programmes. The Assembly is fully aware of this and will lead the implementation of the policy improvement set out in this Action Plan.</p>

¹ Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region, Southern Regional Assembly, Jan 2020, at <https://www.southernassembly.ie/regional-planning/regional-spatial-and-economic-strategy>

² Ibid., Chapter 9 Implementation

Does this organisation provide political backing to the implementation of the policy improvement? If yes, how?	Yes. The elected members of the Assembly were ultimately responsible for adopting the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) policy Instrument and will have an overarching role in the implementation and governance of the RSES. The elected members will provide political support at a regional and local level to improve the governance of our policy instrument.
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Table 1.2: Details of Primary Policy Stakeholder participating in policy improvement design and implementation

1.3 Stakeholders involved in development & implementation of policy improvement



Name of stakeholder	Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government
Type of stakeholder	Irish Government Department and National policy-making organisation.
Responsibilities / role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	 Will be involved as key national stakeholders driving the implementation of the RSES and the National Planning Framework.  They will participate as national public policy representatives and contribute as a member of the Steering Group to assist in developing outputs from the Renewable Energy Investment Forum to inform the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy and ultimately, to improve the governance of the policy instrument.

Table 1.3: Details of organisation 2 participating in policy improvement design and implementation


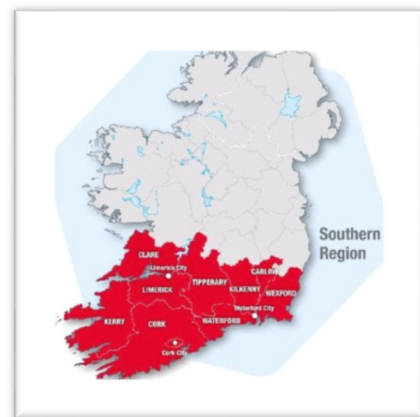
Name of stakeholder	Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO's)
Type of stakeholder	Local Authority Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) established to drive climate action at regional and local level in Ireland.
Responsibilities / role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	 They will participate as local and regional representatives and contribute as a member of the Steering Group to assist in developing outputs from the Renewable Energy Investment Forum to influence the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy.

Table 1.4: Details of organisation 3 participating in policy improvement design and implementation

Part 2: Policy Context of Action Plan

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- ☐ Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- ☐ European Territorial Cooperation programme
- ☒ Other regional development policy instrument



Type of change that this action plan aims to bring about:

Type 2: change in the management of the policy instrument (improved governance)

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed:

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region³

Description of the regional Policy Context

Climate change is a universal challenge, which, will affect our future environment, economy and the way our communities' function. Irish per capita GHG emissions are among the highest in Europe and Government has identified 'climate change as the most important long-term challenge facing Ireland' with a commitment to 'the transformation required to achieve a low carbon resilient future'.

The imperative for Ireland to address this issue will grow – as the EU and United Nations (UN) set out to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement⁴ and as Government and society seek to respond to an unpredictable future visible in changing weather patterns, rising sea levels, flooding events or changes to biodiversity and impacts on agricultural production.

The implications for the region are stark. As the *National Adaptation Framework* sets out, the long-term consequences of climate change include changes to the growing season, water supply and water scarcity, warmer seas and implications for fisheries and aquaculture, more frequent severe weather events, greater risk and incidences of coastal and pluvial flooding and all the attendant risks to infrastructure, homes, businesses and the economic life of the state.

In broad terms, climate change will be addressed through action in the two principal areas of Mitigation and Adaptation, which is reflected in the two national policy documents, the *National Mitigation Plan*, which seeks to tackle the causes of climate change and set the country on a pathway to the achieve decarbonisation and the *National Adaptation Framework*, which seeks to reduce vulnerability to the negative effects of climate change through a focus on the ability of systems and the environment to adjust accordingly.

³ <https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Southern%20Regional%20Assembly%20RSES%202020%20High%20Res.pdf>

⁴ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

De-carbonising electricity to achieve 2030⁵ and 2050⁶ targets will require investment in measures to develop alternative renewable energies with greater interconnection to energy resources, increased capacity in biomass/ biofuels and reconfiguration of power generation facilities from use of fossil fuels to low carbon technical solutions.

European Union goals relating to climate change and energy provide the lead in the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency and the transition to a low carbon and environmentally sustainable economy. The 2030 EU Climate and Energy Package sets specific targets for the year 2030 of at least 40% reduction in GHG emissions with at least 27% of all energy generated from renewable energy sources and at least 27% improvement in energy efficiency.

The National Renewable Energy Action Plan⁷ (NREAP), the Offshore Renewable Energy Plan⁸ and the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan⁹ (NEEAP) bring the targets set at EU level into national policy and set out the detailed approach within each area of energy generation and use.

The Government of Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2019¹⁰ sets ambitious new targets for renewables for 2030 while acknowledging that there is much to do, Ireland will miss the target set for the period 2013 to 2020 for renewables by about one eighth.

The Southern Region is committed to playing its part in delivering on the targets set for the State through the development of wind, wave and tidal energy, solar, hydro, bio-energy, combined heat and power systems in the region. This is very clearly reflected in the Regional Policy Objective (RPOs) set out in the Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region, the key policy instrument for the region for the next twelve years. The RSES aligns regional policy with national and European policy.

The RSES supports the development of measures to address the sectors outlined in Project Ireland 2040 Investment in the Transition to a Low Carbon Society 2018 – 2027. Actions to support the transition will be in the key sectors of renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable transport, agriculture and forestry and climate resilience through flood defences. The decarbonisation action agenda will be linked to implementation of the cross-cutting measures set out in the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework in conjunction with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) and the CARO's.

The piloting of RES Financial Instruments through the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 (SEROP) was explored but is not feasible this late into the programme for a variety of reasons, including existing allocations, competition with other funding, and complexity. Needs analysis and consultation on the next Operational Programme are taking place in 2020.

Table 2.1: Current regional policy context

⁵ An objective established in *The National Climate Policy Position* (2014)

⁶ Objective for an 80-95% reduction below 1990 emission levels in the *EU Energy Roadmap 2050* (2011)

⁷ [https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/The%20National%20Renewable%20Energy%20Action%20Plan%20\(PDF\).pdf](https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/The%20National%20Renewable%20Energy%20Action%20Plan%20(PDF).pdf)

⁸ <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/20140204%20DCENR%20-%20Offshore%20Renewable%20Energy%20Development%20Plan.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/NEEAP%204.pdf>

¹⁰ Climate Action Plan 2019, Government of Ireland (2019)

<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/enie/climate-action/publications/Pages/Climate-Action-Plan.aspx>

Description of the policy instrument selected for improvement

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region has been in development since 2017. The RSES was published and came into effect on 31st January 2020. The implementation phase of the RSES commenced immediately after publication.

The RSES sets out a twelve-year strategic development framework for the Southern Region identifying key priorities for investment. The overarching purpose of the RSES is to support the programme for change set out in Project Ireland 2040 (the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP)), to support Government economic policies and to ensure coordination of planning and development policy matters in the region.

It will be implemented in partnership with local authorities and state agencies to deliver on this vision and build a cohesive and sustainable region.

The RSES affirms the commitment of the Southern Region to the implementation of the policy of Government under Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030 and Climate Action Plan 2019.

Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 87: Low Carbon Energy Future – “The RSES is committed to the implementation of the Government's policy under Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-30¹¹ and Climate Action Plan 2019¹². It is an objective to promote change across business, public and residential sectors to achieve reduced GHG emissions in accordance with current and future national targets, improve energy efficiency and *increase the use of renewable energy sources* across the key sectors of electricity supply, heating, transport and agriculture.”

Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 88: National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework – “The RSES is committed to the implementation of the National Mitigation Plan¹³ and National Adaptation Framework¹⁴: Planning for a climate resilient Ireland to enable the Southern Region transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy. It is an objective to ensure effective co-ordination of climate action with the Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO's) and local authorities to implement the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework in the *development and implementation of long-term solutions and extensive adaptation measures*.”

The RSES includes ten Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) specifically addressing Renewable Energy Generation and Storage, including an objective to support the development of a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy (RRES) with relevant stakeholders.

Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 98 Regional Renewable Energy Strategy – “It is an objective to support *the development of a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy* with relevant stakeholders.”

¹¹<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/energy/publications/Documents/2/Energy%20White%20Paper%20-%20Dec%202015.pdf>

¹²[https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/publications/Documents/16/Climate Action Plan 2019.pdf](https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/publications/Documents/16/Climate%20Action%20Plan%202019.pdf)

¹³<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/National%20Mitigation%20Plan%202017.pdf>

¹⁴<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/National%20Adaptation%20Framework.pdf>

Table 2.2: Policy instrument

Description of the need(s) to be addressed through the policy improvement

The RSES does not refer explicitly to the use of innovative RES grants or financial instruments in the region. However, it does recognise the importance of linking policies, actions and investment programmes to deliver the Regional Strategic Outcomes.

“The implementation phase of delivering the RSES will focus on policies, actions and investment programmes to deliver the Regional Strategic Outcomes. The Regional Assembly will construct a full implementation plan for the RSES with clear time bound progress indicators and transparent reporting milestones with the involvement of key stakeholders from the Region¹⁵.”

The decision to focus on influencing the management of the policy instrument (improved governance) was based on three key factors:

1. An effective response at regional level requires co-ordination and joint working arrangements between the Assembly, Local Authorities and the recently established Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) to support the development of long-term solutions and extensive adaptation measures in what will be a long-term evolving process.
2. Investment is key to delivering the renewable energy objectives of the RSES and this will be achieved through a variety of funding sources and funding instruments. This includes but is not limited to future ERDF co-funded Operational Programmes as these can be constrained by operational programme lifecycles¹⁶ and may not provide sufficient scale¹⁷.
3. The implementation phase of the RSES will be critical in linking policies, actions and investment programmes to deliver the Regional Policy Objectives on renewable energy generation and storage.

Conclusion

The implementation and governance of the RSES, in particular the content of the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy offer the potential to promote RES financial instruments and to improve public / private sector co-operation through relevant goal setting, effective monitoring and ongoing evaluation.

For further information on how the policy instrument will be improved by our actions please refer to Part 3 of the Regional Action Plan.

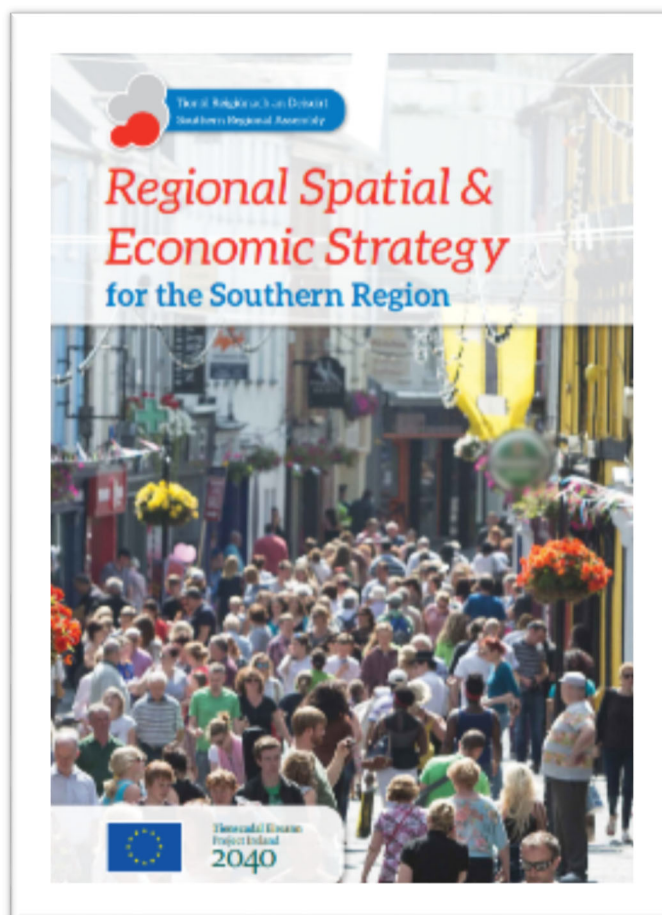
Table 2.3: Policy need(s)

¹⁵ Ibid., Chapter 9 Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation

¹⁶ Research for REGI Committee: Financial instruments for energy efficiency and renewable energy (2017)

¹⁷ Stocktaking study on financial instruments by sector: Progress to date, market needs and implications for financial instruments. The use of financial instruments in the ‘Renewable Energy’ sector, FI Kompass (2020).

Part 3: Regional Actions & Timeframe



3.1 Regional Action

Regional Action 1 – Include specific goals and targets for the use of innovative Financial Instruments supporting renewable energy investment in the new Regional Renewable Energy Strategy that will be developed as part of the implementation of the Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy 2020 – 2031 for the Southern Region.

Relevance to the Project

At the 1st Interregional Event in Extremadura, SPAIN (July 2018), it was evident that the lead partner AGENEX, plays an important regional role in bringing together renewable energy investors, developers and public bodies to address regional needs. This demonstrated the importance of regional co-ordination to support public/private sector co-operation in RES goal setting and policy implementation.

At the 2nd Interregional Event in Lublin, POLAND (January 2019), we visited the Energy Cluster “Dolina Zielway”, an example of how neighbouring local authorities co-operated together to achieve energy policy goals, by pooling expertise, sharing risk and co-investing in renewable energy investment projects. This demonstrated how local authorities in our region can set targets to work co-operatively to achieve sufficient scale to utilise RES financial instruments.

At the 3rd Interregional Event in Split, CROATIA (May 2019), the Polish partners shared details of an Interreg Central Europe project “FIRECE” that aims to improve the capacities of the public sector to utilise innovative financial instruments and plan territorially based low-carbon strategies in the framework of Regional Energy Plans. This highlighted the importance of ongoing capacity building within the public sector if we are to include goals for the use of RES financial instruments in our Regional Renewable Energy Strategy.

At the 4th Interregional Event in Waterford, IRELAND (July 2019), we broadened the participation of the Assembly staff in the FIRESPOL project to include staff responsible for both Regional Planning and for EU Programmes, and shared details of the draft Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy (RSES) with project partners. It became clear through the presentations and discussions at that event that the RSES provides a useful mechanism for mainstreaming and embedding learning from the FIRESPOL project at regional, county and city level.

At the 5th Interregional Event in Hesse, GERMANY (October 2019), we were introduced to the “Regional Energy Concept - FrankfurtRheinMain - 100% energy efficient and renewable” through a contribution by a local stakeholder and follow up conversations and correspondence. The concept includes specific goals around promoting, supporting and monitoring renewable energy investment projects in the region. The Regional Energy Concept is intended to complement formal regional planning and to focus in particular on the cooperation between the relevant public bodies, the business community and individuals under private law (clubs, associations, cooperatives, etc.). It includes a structure for regional energy monitoring so that energy consumption, generation and potential should not only be accounted for in the region, but also for the rural districts and the cities and municipalities. This concept inspired us to examine we can include specific goals around promoting, supporting and monitoring renewable energy investment projects in the implementation of the RSES, our selected policy instrument.

Nature of the Action

This action will improve the policy instrument by setting specific goals and targets for the use of innovative Financial Instruments supporting renewable energy investment in the region. These targets will be included in the new Regional Renewable Energy Strategy as part of the implementation of the Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy for the Southern Region.

This action will also improve the governance of the policy instrument, recognizing that:

1. An effective response at regional level requires co-ordination and joint working arrangements between the Assembly, Local Authorities and the recently established Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs)
2. Investment is key to delivering the renewable energy objectives of the RSES and this will be achieved through a variety of funding sources and funding instruments. This requires capacity building, greater public/private sector co-operation and alignment of local, regional, national and EU policy.
3. The implementation phase of the RSES is critical in linking policies, actions and investment programmes to deliver the Regional Policy Objectives on renewable energy generation and storage.

The Assembly will have a co-ordinating role in the region, bringing together national agencies and the relevant government departments, local public bodies, including the ten local authorities, six energy agencies, two Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) and private sector investors and developers.

Building on the outputs from the FIRESPOL project, a new Renewable Energy Investment Forum will create an **ongoing** mechanism to discuss, explore and make recommendations on the use of innovative Financial Instruments supporting renewable energy investment in the region. It will inform the new Regional Renewable Energy Strategy and will feed into the work of the RSES monitoring committee which will be established to:

- Oversee progress of implementation;
- Examine issues that affect the progress of the strategy development;
- Identify opportunities to drive regional development;
- Leverage new funding, partnership and collaboration opportunities in the region.

The RSES monitoring committee may include the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. The Assembly will continue to work closely these national stakeholders and with a range of local and regional stakeholders to achieve the Regional Policy Objectives set out in the RSES and in particular those supporting Renewable Energy.

In summary, this action provides a useful mechanism for mainstreaming and embedding learning from the FIRESPOL project at regional, county and city level. The FIRESPOL Project provides both experience and guidance to facilitate the Assembly to work with the relevant Government departments, local authorities and stakeholders, helping them to explore, understand and utilise financial instruments that support greater RES investment in the region.

	Main Steps	Deadline	Result
a)	Establish Renewable Energy Investment Forum Steering Group	06/2020	
b)	Event Design & Promotion - Renewable Energy Investment Forum Launch Event	06/2020	
c)	Event Management - Renewable Energy Investment Forum Launch Event	07/2020	
d)	Presentation of FIRESPOL project outputs at Renewable Energy Investment Forum Launch Event	07/2020	
e)	Assembly to complete a short report to share the outputs of the Renewable Energy Investment Forum Launch Event to all relevant stakeholders in the region	09/2020	
f)	Secure commitment from the Assembly and/or other stakeholder(s) to host future Industry Forum event(s) in 2021	01/2021	
g)	Capture the outputs of the Renewable Energy Investment Forum and present proposal to influence the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy to the RSES Policy Instrument owner	01/2021	
h)	Obtain agreement from the RSES Policy Instrument owner to incorporate some of the outputs of the Renewable Energy Investment Forum into the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy	06/2021	
j)	Monitor the development of the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy for inclusion of specific goals and targets for the use of innovative Financial Instruments supporting renewable energy investment.	11/2021	
j)	Publication of the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy with specific goals and targets for the use of innovative Financial Instruments supporting renewable energy investment included	04/2022 – Date of actual policy improvement implemented	
Stakeholders Involved	Southern Regional Assembly		
Timeframe	Policy Improvement to be achieved by 04/2022		
Costs and funding	The costs to be incurred with the implementation of the action will be internalised in the current activities of the different organisations involved.		
Performance Indicators	Establishment of Renewable Energy Investment Forum – 1 to be established Publication of Regional Renewable Energy Strategy – 1 to be published Attain a leverage effect in new RES public investment of 5		

Table 3.1: Action to develop and implement the policy improvement

Part 4: Regional Action Plan Endorsements

The Assembly acknowledges the added value of the FIRESPOL project and its contribution to the RSES, provided through the identification of Good Practice(s) and Interregional learning and the development of this Regional Action Plan.

The Assembly consider the potential import of the Good Practice(s) and Interregional learning mentioned in this Regional Action Plan, with necessary adaption according to regional context, to represent a valuable input for further development of renewable energy investment and reduction of carbon emissions in the Southern Region.

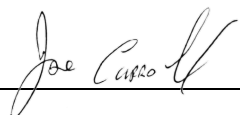
We hereby confirm our support for the import and implementation of the Good Practice(s) as described in this Regional Action Plan as well as for the implementation of the action reported in Part 3 of this document.

Name & Organisation:

Councillor Joe Carroll, Cathaoirleach of the Southern Regional Assembly

Date: 16 July, 2020

Signature:



Name & Function:

Mr David Kelly, Director, Southern Regional Assembly

Date: 08 July, 2020

Signature:



Name & Function:

Ms Derville Brennan, Assistant Director, EU & Corporate Affairs Division, Southern Regional Assembly

Date: 08 July 2020

Signature:



Name & Function:

Mr Kevin Lynch, Assistant Director, Planning Division, Southern Regional Assembly

Date: 17 August 2020

Signature:

