

Statement by the Independent Expert Panel considering the EirGrid Grid West and Grid Link projects

Please find below statement issued on behalf of the Independent Expert Panel:

Dublin, 7 May 2014

The Independent Expert Panel (the Panel) considering EirGrid's Grid West and Grid Link projects has held four meetings between 10 February 2014 and 2 May 2014. The Panel, whose Terms of Reference are appended hereunder, was appointed by Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Mr. Pat Rabbitte, on foot of a Government decision. In line with the Government decision, the Panel was asked to oversee the integrity of a process to be undertaken by Eirgrid to report on the Grid West (GW) and Grid Link (GL) projects.

To that end, the Panel has now finalised and approved the Terms of Reference (also appended hereunder) for comprehensive, route specific studies/reports of fully undergrounded and overhead options for each of the GW and GL projects, including assessments of potential environmental impacts, technical efficacy and cost factors. The studies/reports will be undertaken or commissioned by Eirgrid in accordance with those Terms of Reference set by the Panel who will also oversee EirGrid's study/reporting process. Importantly, the Panel will, in due course, provide an opinion to the Minister on the completeness, objectivity and comparability (underground with overhead) of the studies/reports undertaken or commissioned by Eirgrid and will oversee the publication by EirGrid of the two studies/reports prior to EirGrid proceeding to public consultation on the two projects.

The Panel also considered issues in respect of the North South (N/S) Transmission Line project which the Minister had raised with the Chairperson, subsequent to the Government decision. The Minister had asked the Chairperson to consider what, if anything, the Panel could do with regard to the North South project (N/S).

While the N/S project is not covered by the Government's decision, having discussed the Minister's request, and in the light of the finalised Terms of Reference for the studies/reports of fully undergrounded and overhead options for each of the GW and GL projects, the Panel decided that it would provide an opinion to the Minister on the compatibility of the methodologies to be employed on the GW and GL projects with what has already been done (i.e. up to 2 May 2014, being the date that the Panel decided to examine the N/S project) on the North South Transmission Line project.

The Panel has today written to the Minister to apprise him of the Panel's progress and decisions to date.

The Panel has also written today to EirGrid to convey the Panel's requirements with regard to the GW, GL and N/S projects.

Further statements will issue from the Panel at appropriate future junctures.

ENDS

Issued by the Independent Expert Panel considering EirGrid's Grid West and Grid Link projects:

- Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness, Chairperson
- Professor Keith Bell
- Professor John FitzGerald
- Dr. Karen Foley
- Mr. Colm McCarthy

The Panel may be contacted at expertpanel@dcentr.ie

Note to Editors:

Independent Expert Panel

Terms of Reference

(2 May 2014)

Key Objective

The Independent Expert Panel shall provide a report to the Minister. In preparing its report to the Minister the Independent Expert Panel shall:

- Oversee the integrity of a process that will be undertaken by Eirgrid to report on Grid Link (GL) and Grid West (GW);
- Approve the terms of reference for comprehensive, route specific studies/reports of fully undergrounded options for each of the GW and GL projects, including assessments of potential environmental impacts, technical efficacy and cost factors. The studies/reports will be undertaken and/or commissioned by Eirgrid in accordance with the terms of reference set by the Independent Expert Panel (IEP). The IEP will oversee EirGrid's study/reporting process as the IEP sees fit;
- Provide an opinion to the Minister on the completeness, objectivity and comparability (underground with overhead) of the studies/reports undertaken and/or commissioned by Eirgrid;

- Oversee the publication by EirGrid of the two studies/reports prior to EirGrid proceeding to public consultation on the two projects; and

North South Transmission Line Project

- The Independent Expert Panel shall also provide an opinion to the Minister on the compatibility of the methodologies to be employed on the GL and GW projects with what has already been done on the North South Transmission Line project.

Miscellaneous

As part of its remit, the IEP:

- may commission its own work as it sees fit, or on its own initiative, or if there is any perceived deficiency in the studies/reports presented by Eirgrid;
- may consult with EirGrid or any other body as the IEP sees fit;
- may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its terms of reference.

The following matters are outside of the remit of the IEP:

- the case for the actual provision of the North South transmission line, the Grid Link or the Grid West projects;
- Electro Magnetic Field (EMF) issues; and
- Broader energy policy issues.

Underground and Overhead Studies for Grid West and Grid Link

Terms of Reference

(2 May 2014)

Introduction

This document sets out a draft Terms of Reference for studies/reports that would facilitate a comparative analysis of underground and overhead alternatives for the Grid West and Grid Link projects.

It is proposed to develop route specific alternatives for each project which can subsequently be compared under technical, economic and environmental criteria.

The underground cable (UGC) option will be entirely underground for the length of the circuit (in each case over 100km). The overhead line (OHL) option will be based on HVAC technology and may include some re-construction of existing routes and/or partial undergrounding for limited sections where appropriate and feasible.

Terms of Reference

For each of the Grid West and Grid Link projects undergrounding and overhead options will be assessed and analysed in respect of Technical, Economic and Environmental characteristics. This will be done to comparable levels of detail for each option and set out in a manner that facilitates comparison between them. In respect of each network reinforcement option, the study/report should concern evaluation of the particular route most suited to use of that option. In each case, any significant assumptions made and the sources of data used should be clearly stated.

1. Technical

The technical analysis will include appraisal of the following:

- a. Compliance with all relevant safety standards;
- b. Compliance with system reliability and security standards;
- c. The average failure rates during normal operation, average repair times and availabilities of the main elements of each option;
- d. The expected impact on reliability of supply of unavailability of the development;
- e. Implementation timelines, including procurement and availability of key equipment and resources;
- f. The extent to which future reinforcement of, and/or connection to, the transmission network is facilitated;
- g. The risk associated with use of any untried technology solution that would be required as part of a development option; and
- h. Compliance with good utility practice.

2. Economic

The economic analysis will include appraisal of the following:

- a. Project pre-engineering costs, including costs of evaluation of route, line technology and substation options;
- b. Project implementation costs including:
 - cost of procurement, installation and commissioning of overhead line and/or underground cable for the required continuous pre-fault, continuous post-fault and short-term post-fault ratings;
 - costs of substations including procurement, installation and commissioning of required protection and control equipment and any equipment necessary for compliance with relevant technical standards;
 - all relevant civil works for construction, including: for access to sites; for any necessary river/road/rail crossings or diversions, any tunnels necessary for any sections of underground cable, and for towers plus their foundations for sections of overhead line; and for post-construction restoration;
 - Third Party Payments (wayleaves, community gain, rates etc);
 - Interest During Construction; and
 - the costs of any environmental monitoring deemed necessary to mitigate the impact of the development during construction or ongoing operation.
- c. Project life cycle costs (including Losses, Operation & Maintenance, Decommissioning and the costs of retaining any necessary specialist repair teams);
- d. The expected costs to operation of the Single Electricity Market arising from unavailability of the development; and
- e. Estimates of the range of uncertainty attaching to all of the cost components under all options.

3. Environmental

The environmental analysis should be particular to each network reinforcement option and its associated route and substation locations with each option developed in accordance with best practice. The analysis will include:

- a. The environmental impact of OHL and UGC options on the following:
 - Biodiversity, flora and fauna;

- Water (surface, ground, estuarine and coastal);
- Soil;
- Landscape and Visual;
- Cultural Heritage (architectural and archaeological heritage);
- Communities;
- Air;
- Climatic Factors;
- Material Assets;
- Tourism; and
- Traffic and noise.

Notes:

1. A distinction should be made between the impact (the action being taken) and the effect (the change resulting from that action).
 2. The type of effect should be identified (e.g. positive/beneficial, negative/adverse, direct, indirect, cumulative, short-, medium-, long-term, permanent, temporary).
 3. The assessment should identify all likely significant environmental effects.
- b. Identification of, and potential for impact and effect (e.g. positive/beneficial, negative/adverse, direct, indirect, cumulative, short-, medium-, long-term, permanent, temporary) upon, any Natura 2000 and/or other sites with environmental designations;
- c. Potential impacts in the construction phase and during on-going operation, including in the event of any necessary repair to the installation;
- d. Potential for imposing new limits on existing land use, both during the construction phase and during on-going operation; and
- e. Proposed mitigation measures, their effectiveness and cost.

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