

Shaping Our Electricity Future (SOEF) Advisory Council Meeting #14 Minutes

Date: May 14th, 2026

Time: 10:00 - 15:00

Venue: Sandymount Hotel, Dublin 4

Chairs: Liam Ryan (EirGrid) and Gerard Carlin (SONI)

Moderator: Nicola de Beer (EirGrid)

Council Member Attendees:

Name	Representing
Bobby Smith	Storage
David Graham	Renewables
Graeme McWilliams	Large Energy Users
Jag Basi	Conv. Production
Kate Garth	Renewables
Laura Mehigan	Renewables
Margaret Nee	Renewables
Mark Fitch	New Technology
Paddy Fitzgerald	Conv. Production
Paul Blount	Storage
Paul Lennon	Gas Networks
Peter Harte	New Technology
Seamus Howard	Manufacturer
Stacy Feldmann	Conv. Production
Thomas O'Sullivan	Large Energy Users
Robin McCormick	Consultant
Invited Guests	
Brian Ryan	Consultant
Marcos Byrne	Wind Energy Ireland (WEI)
Donna McCullough	DfE
Ivan Hargie	DfE
Brían Diskin	DCEE
Marie Therese Campbell	UR
Tony Hearne	ESB Networks
Martin Hickey	ESB Networks

Apologies from:

Name	Representing
Brian Mongan	Demand Response
David Laverty	Academia
Frank Burke	Storage
Harry McCracken	Renewables
James Delahunt	Consultant
John Fitzgerald	New Technology
Jonathan Wisdom	TSO
Lisa Foley	Consultant

Mark Alexander	TSO
Neil Morris	Large Energy Users
Brendan Kelly	Renewables
Noel Cunniffe	Renewables
Paddy Finn	Demand Response
Rory Mullan	Consultant

Introduction by Moderator Nicola de Beer, Head of Strategic Enablement, Change & Vendor Management, EirGrid

- **Nicola de Beer** introduced and outlined the day’s agenda, highlighting that there would be time for Q&A throughout the session.

Opening Remarks by Liam Ryan, Chief Technology & Transformation Officer, EirGrid

- **Liam Ryan** welcomed attendees and expressed sincere appreciation for their continued support, guidance, and constructive challenge throughout the term of the current Advisory Council.
- Noted this is the final session under the current Council membership, with thanks for the significant contributions made over this period.
- Recognition given to Gerard Carlin on his upcoming departure, acknowledging his contribution to the transport and energy sectors across Ireland and Northern Ireland, wishing him well in future opportunities.
- Mentioned the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and its continued impact on energy prices. The importance of ongoing efforts to support society and vulnerable groups managing energy costs.
- The Fault Ride Through (FRT) modification has been submitted to the CRU, with a decision pending.
- Progress made on offshore developments, including CRU approval of the Phase 1 connection agreements, with completion targeted for mid-June (subject to final alignment). As well as advancement of survey work on the South Coast. There is continued coordination across EirGrid and SONI to deliver projects.
- It was noted that procurement for offshore platforms has been launched, with strong Irish representation at Wind Europe, reinforcing Ireland’s position in the renewable energy sector.
- Positive feedback was shared on ministerial engagement at Wind Europe, with strong international interest in Ireland.
- EirGrid will publish its revised strategy in June, with stakeholder engagement sessions to follow.
- **Liam Ryan** concluded by reiterating thanks to members and transitioning the meeting forward.

Presentation: “2026 Council Member Refresh Update”

Presenter: James Atkinson, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, EirGrid

- **James Atkinson** reminded existing Advisory Council members to express their interest in remaining on the Council from September 2026-2028 as member refresh now underway.
- Closing date for new members to submit their expressions of interest (EOI) is 20th May 2026. James encouraged attendees to share the open letter with details of the EOI process with people who may be interested.

SOEF Leads Panel: Strategic Workstreams Update

Panellists:

- **Stephen Gannon** - Head of Future Markets, EirGrid
- **Michael Atcheson** - Head of Future Power Markets, SONI
- **Maria Madders** - Head of Future Operations, EirGrid
- **David McGowan** - Head of Future Power Systems, SONI
- **Jason Kenna (Online)** - Head of Network Projects Ireland, EirGrid
- **Jason Kenna (Online)** provided update on the Public Engagement workstream
- **Eimear Watson** - Head of Networks, SONI

Each workstream lead provided an overview of the workstreams update across Markets, Operations, Network and Public Engagement. Updates as presented are contained within the slides presented, published on EirGrid website.

Questions and comments were heard from the Council in relation to the workstreams updates and these prompted discussion in relation to a number of topics including Fault Ride Through, Flexibility Needs Assessment, the implementation timeframe of Non-Priority Dispatch of Renewables (NPDR), progress on grid development and the recent publication of the Transmission Infrastructure Development (TID), Firm Access report and delivering on the SOEF targets, shunt reactors for voltage control, SONI negative reserve trials and support for an Electrification Action Plan.

Presentation: “Dispatch Down: Heat & Thermal Storage”

Presenters: Marc Senouci, Head of Power System Insights and Research and Chittesh Chandran, Principal Engineer, EirGrid

- **Marc Senouci** opened noting that the presentation builds on previous Advisory Council discussions on renewable dispatch down and reflects actions progressed from the associated working group.
- The focus of the work is on exploring dispatchable load from the heat sector, as well as the role of thermal storage, as part of a broader approach to mitigating renewable dispatch down.
- It was highlighted that this forms part of the wider roadmap on dispatchable demand and its potential contribution to system flexibility.
- The **Renewable Dispatch Down Working Group draft action plan** is advancing, with multiple sections currently under review.
- The draft has been shared with working group members and is undergoing internal governance review. An end-June timeline remains the target to finalise the document, and modelling and analysis work is progressing in parallel.
- **Chittesh Chandran** provided a detailed walkthrough of the modelling and analysis in relation to a piece of work on dispatchable load and thermal storage and the potential benefit to reduce surplus renewable dispatch down.

Questions were taken from Members and Invited guests which covered topics including:

- The economics of thermal storage, the investment case including any market mechanisms / incentives required and associated system benefits.
- The next steps in the analysis.
- Assessments of benefits at a more local level to help alleviate local constraints.
- The growing momentum in the industrial thermal storage sector, the emergence of new technologies, increasing focus at EU level and the identification of potential system benefits of thermal storage.
- It was emphasised that heat represents a significant proportion of overall energy demand in Ireland, exceeding electricity consumption, and therefore presents a substantial opportunity to absorb surplus renewable generation if effectively integrated with the power system.
- EirGrid notes that a continuous effort is being made to improve modelling approaches and incorporate industry feedback where possible. It was acknowledged that changes must be implemented in a phased and structured manner rather than all at once. It was further highlighted that early-stage thinking is underway on how greater alignment between the gas and electricity markets could support these developments, although this remains at a conceptual stage. The importance of the topic was recognised, and appreciation was expressed for the insights provided, which will help to inform ongoing work and future development in this area.
- Potential changes needed to market rules and regulation so that the financial value can flow back to investors and create a viable investment incentive.
- Modelling of thermal storage and role of gas in maintaining system reliability.

Presentation: “Operational Challenges of solar energy integration”

Presenter: Amir Moshari, Future Operations, EirGrid

- Amir’s presentation outlined key operational challenges arising from the rapid growth of solar generation in Ireland.
- Solar is vital for decarbonisation, but its variability and intermittency are creating operational challenges for the power system, including impacts on demand, ramping, stability and fault response. Growing levels of behind-the-meter solar add further risk due to limited visibility and control.
- The presentation highlighted these issues and outlined ongoing work by EirGrid, SONI, DSOs and regulators to improve forecasting, controllability, coordination and supporting system services.

The moderator welcomed Questions and Discussion, which covered topics including increased operational challenges in line with solar growth, optimal solar in the generation mix, interplay of demand profile and solar, the challenge in embedded solar growth, incentive & supporting mechanisms for optimal embedded solar, key drivers of Ireland-specific challenges, colocation of demand and generation, storage, the role of demand-side response aggregators, potential benefits of east-west solar orientation and higher DC/AC ratios.

Members Hour: Two 30min presentations:

Hybrids - Industry Perspective - Margaret Nee, Kate Garth & Bobby Smith (Members)

Note: This segment represents the views and insight of a group of Advisory Council members. The views expressed are for consideration by the TSOs/DSOs and do not constitute agreed actions or direction in relation to delivering hybrids (MEC Sharing). The TSO and DSO will release an implementation plan in Summer 2026 with close stakeholder engagement.

Industry Perspective

- Advisory Council members offered their insights. They highlighted that substantial work and learnings already exist, and progress should build on this rather than restarting.
- Members highlighted the benefits of Hybrid connections including more efficient use of scarce grid infrastructure, particularly through shared connection points and greater system flexibility, enhanced capability for system services, balancing, and congestion management.
- Members called on the TSO/DSO to publish the Sharing MEC implementation roadmap in a timely manner.

TSO/DSO Comment

- EirGrid acknowledged that the scope of work is comprehensive, with multiple workstreams involved.
- It was noted that further engagement with industry is planned, with a workshop expected at the end of June to provide additional clarity on hybrids MEC Sharing project, particularly the implementation roadmap
- The approach is to progress delivery step-by-step, resolving challenges incrementally to ensure that:
- MEC sharing can be implemented effectively
- Future development of integrated hybrids is well-structured and robust
- The objective is to ensure solutions are fit for both industry and system operators before full implementation.

The role of price in the energy system - David Graham (Member)

Note: This segment represents the views and insight of an Advisory Council member. The views expressed are for consideration by the TSOs/DSOs and do not constitute agreed actions or direction in relation to pricing or consumer engagement. The objective of this segment was to provide a valuable perspective for inspiration and consideration.

- Price was highlighted as a key tool in the energy system, providing both **information and incentive** to guide dispatch, investment decisions, and consumer behaviour.
- Pricing signals influence:
 - **Dispatch of assets** (short-term operation)
 - **Investment decisions** (what is built or retired)
 - **Customer behaviour, including demand, export, and technology adoption**
- David noted that the system contains **multiple price signals** (e.g. wholesale, carbon, capacity, network, retail), which serve different roles including market-based pricing, auctions, and cost recovery.
- The importance of **alignment and coherence across all price signals** was emphasised to avoid conflicting incentives and unintended outcomes.
- From a supplier perspective, clear and consistent pricing is required to both **recover costs and influence customer behaviour**, particularly during the energy transition.
- David concluded with a summary that price is a powerful but complex tool, and to be effective it must be clear in purpose, intentional in design and coherent across the system.

Questions and Discussion followed, including the following topics:

- Level of wholesale market price signals required for investment in new technologies and ensure the appropriate mix of renewables, storage, system services, and backup generation.

- Cost recovery signals, imperfections, incentivised behaviour including increasing demand when there is surplus generation and demand reduction (when system is constrained)
- Optimum delivery mechanism of signals e.g. through energy-based charges or capacity-based charges

Closing Remarks by Gerard Carlin, Director of Networks & Innovation, SONI

- Gerard thanked all members for their contribution and reflected on the importance of pricing, referencing the link between incentives and outcomes.
- Personal thanks were extended to EirGrid, industry stakeholders, and the SONI team, noting strong support and collaboration over the past two years.
- It was highlighted that the Advisory Council has led to improved understanding and alignment across TSOs, regulators, departments, and industry.
- Reflecting on progress since September 2024, it was noted that:
 - Issues such as dispatch down remain but are better understood and managed.
 - Collaboration between EirGrid and SONI has strengthened significantly.
 - Progress has been made across key programmes (e.g. grid forming, Hybrids, North-South Interconnector)
 - We need to consider a more holistic, system-wide approach, including greater focus on system integration and breaking down silos across the industry.
- Gerard closed by sincerely thanking all Council members, regulators, departments, and organisers.

Closing Remarks by Moderator Nicola de Beer, Head of Strategic Enablement, Change & Vendor Management, EirGrid

- Nicola thanked Advisory Council members for their significant contribution over the past two years, acknowledging the value of continued participation.
- Nicola highlighted the importance of continued collaboration, noting that progress is driven by collective effort across the group.
- The next meeting will take place in September with the newly selected cohort of members, following the member refresh process which is now underway.

Schedule of Advisory Council Meetings in 2026

- 17th September 2026 in Dublin

Meeting Actions

#	Topic	Action	Owner	Due
1	Consideration of working groups	TSO to meet internally to review requests for working groups raised via the Council.	James Atkinson	June 30 th