Shaping Our Electricity Future (SOEF) Advisory Council Meeting #12 Minutes

Date: September 23rd, 2025
Time: 10:00 – 16:00
Venue: The Europa Hotel, Belfast, Northern Ireland
Chairs: Eoin Kennedy (EirGrid) and Gerard Carlin (SONI)
Impartial Moderator: Colleen Savage (M-Co Ltd.)

Meeting Attendees:

Attended In Person	Representing
Bobby Smith	Storage
Brendan Kelly	Renewables
Brian Mongan	Demand Response
David Laverty	Academia
Graeme McWilliams	Large Energy Users
Jag Basi	Conv. Production
Kate Garth	Renewables
Laura Mehigan	Renewables
Lisa Foley	Consultant
Linzi Hyvart	DfE
Marie Therese Campbell	UR
Mark Alexander	TSO
Mark Fitch	New Technology
Neil Morris	Large Energy Users
Paddy Fitzgerald	Conv. Production
Rachel Sankannawar	DfE
Robert O'Rourke	CRU
Robin McCormick	Consultant
Sarah Brady	DfE
Paul Lennon	Gas Networks Ireland
Stacy Feldmann	Conv. Production
Zoe Crowe	DfE
Dialled in Online via Teams	
Brían Diskin	DCEE
Frank Burke	Storage
James Delahunt	Consultant
Margaret Nee	Renewables
Noel Cunniffe	Renewables
Paddy Finn	Demand Response
Peter Harte	New Technology
Rory Mullan	Consultant
Seamus Howard	Manufacturer
Thomas O'Sullivan	Large Energy Users
Tony Hearne	ESB Networks (DSO)

Apologies from:

Name	Representing
David Hill	NIE Networks (DSO)
David Graham	Renewables
Fergal McParland	DECC
Harry McCracken	Renewables
John Fitzgerald	New Technology
Jonathan Wisdom	TSO
Paul Blount	Storage
Teresa Fallon	ESB Networks (DSO)
Trevor Harron	NIE Networks (DSO)
Liam Ryan	EirGrid

Agenda: SOEF Advisory Council #12

The Europa Hotel, Belfast, 23rd September, 2025

TIME	DURATION	TOPIC	DETAIL	PRESENTER/S
10:00	25 min	Coffee & Networking		All
10:25	10 min	Kick-Off: Introduction, Agenda, Open Actions	Welcome participants, introduce agenda, address open actions	Co-Chairs & Moderator
10:35	20 min	DfE: Achieving 80 by 30	Plenary presentation with time for Q&A	Rachel Sankannawar, DfE
10:55	60 min	SOEF Strategic Workstreams Panel	Update from EirGrid and SONI workstream leads, Q&A	Workstream Leads
11:55	60 min	Interactive Breakouts	Room breaks into 3 groups: Markets, Operations, Networks & Public Engagement	*Markets* - Stephen Gannon & Michael Atcheson *Operations* - David McGowan & Bryan Murray *Networks & Public Engagement* - Sinead Dooley, Eimear Watson
12:55	45 min	Lunch	Served in Penthouse Meeting Room	
13:40	30 min	RAs Update: SEM-C Strategy Overview	Engagement with council on upcoming SEM-C Strategy consultation	Robert O'Rourke & Marie-Therese Campbell
14:10	20 min	EirGrid Dispatch Down Working Group Update	Overview of the progress made by the Working Group	Marc Senouci & WG Members
14:30	10 min	Optional Comfort Break		
14:40	40 min	Northern Ireland: Minimum No. Of Units	Overview of the challenge, industry feedback and Q&A	David McGowan & Team
15:20	20 min	Reflection, Next Steps and Closing Messages		
15:40		***Meeting End***		

Meeting Chairs:




Eoin Kennedy Gerard Carlin



Moderator: Colleen Savage

EirGrid SONI

A pre-read is shared ahead of the meeting.

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Opening Remarks by Eoin Kennedy, Director of Innovation & Planning, EirGrid and Gerard Carlin, Director of Networks & Innovation, SONI

- **Gerard Carlin**, as co-chair welcomed everyone and expressed his interest in hearing insights today from the Advisory council.
- **Gerard** spoke about the new renewable energy support scheme in Northern Ireland. He mentioned some projects in NI and their new strategy.
- **Eoin Kennedy** in his capacity as co-chair, welcomed everyone with thanks for taking the time and traveling to be here. Eoin mentioned EirGrid is working on a new strategy 2026-2030 and that there has been a lot of engagement with the CRU on PR6 (Price Review 6). Eoin also highlighted the taskforces recently established by the Irish Government in relation to infrastructure (Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce) and the National Energy Affordability Taskforce. Eoin stated that it is an exciting time for the industry and welcomed the government equity injection for EirGrid and ESB Networks. Eoin looked forward to hearing the views of the Council members on how we progress towards our goals over the coming years.

Presentation: *Achieving 80 by 30*

Presenter: Rachel Sankannawar, Director at the Dept for Economy NI

- **Colleen Savage** walked through the agenda before inviting **Rachel Sankannawar** to present on the Department for Economy's "80 by 30" ambition
- **Rachel** outlines her role as the strategic lead and project director for the 80% renewable electricity by 2030 target.
- Rachel notes that unlike other approaches, the 80% target in NI is based on consumption not generation. This means we focus on electricity used by consumers and customers rather than electricity generated. The

80% target is placed on the DfE and gets lots of stakeholder and public attention. As so much of the dependencies lie outside DfE's control, stakeholder engagement is vital for success. It is also statutory.
- Decarbonisation is key. From a 1990 baseline, the electricity sector has reduced its emissions by 60%, which is the single greatest contribution to emissions of any sector in Northern Ireland. Electricity accounts for about 11% of emissions in NI. Renewable generation in Northern Ireland at March 2025 was 43%.

SOEF Leads Panel: Strategic Workstreams Update

Panellists:

- **Stephen Gannon – Head of Future Power Markets, EirGrid**
- **Michael Atcheson – Head of Future Power Markets, SONI**
- **Bryan Murray – Head of Future Operations, EirGrid**
- **David McGowan - Head of Future Power Systems, SONI**
- **Sinead Dooley – Head of Public Engagement, EirGrid**
- **Eimear Watson – Head of Networks, SONI**

- Each workstream lead provided an overview of the workstreams update across Markets, Operations, Network and Public Engagement.

Roundtable Breakout Sessions

- Advisory Council Members formed three Breakout Tables, focussing on one of three topics.
- Attendees online formed a virtual breakout, facilitated by Eoin Kennedy.
- **Moderator** introduced the breakout group discussions, with each table facilitated by an EirGrid or SONI representative. Participants were given a key question or questions to provide insight and advice on.

Breakout Topics:

- **Operations - David McGowan & Bryan Murray**
  - ***Identify an operational change which you feel should be prioritised. Suggest ways to effectively implement this.***
- **Networks & Public Engagement – Sinead Dooley, Eimear Watson**
  - ***Identify the top policy or regulatory change that would most accelerate grid delivery in Ireland. Prepare one concrete recommendation to share back with the group.***
  - ***Time-Permitting: What does impactful engagement mean to you as a key stakeholder?***
- **Markets - Stephen Gannon & Michael Atcheson**
  - ***As we move toward the implementation of the Future Arrangements for System Services (FASS)… Do you see any barriers to entry for new participants? And… Where do you believe the greatest opportunities lie for innovation, competition, and system value?***
- **Online, Multiple topics - Eoin Kennedy**
  - ***Broad discussion across a combination of above topics.***

Breakout Playback

- An Advisory Council member volunteered from each table to share their findings with the room.
- The points presented are the views, ideas and suggestions of members but not necessarily considered for action.

Table 1: An Operational Change Which Should be Prioritised

Presenter: Member

Key Points:

- The roundtable outlined some issues: Fault Ride-Through for demand facilities and how the system operators continue managing that. System and data visibility for the system operators for generation and demand. There are ongoing requirements for voltage, frequency response and negative reserve, but also in relation to the comms around system services. A view was expressed that there appears to be a message to potential investors in system services that they are not needed going forward, which may have a negative operational impact in future.
- The table considered the growth in heat, transport electrification etc and the future grid usage and load profile. Considered the route to participation; such as Dispatchable Consumption Units/Hybrid units etc.
- Priority change(s): there were many but the table narrowed it down to system needs. The product types, volume required to 2030 and beyond. A 10-year services forecast is needed and we must identify the

characteristics needed from technologies, for example for interconnectors, LDES etc and the need out to 2040 and beyond.

- **Bryan Murray** noted that the main takeaway is to continue considering what the grid will likely look like in 10 years and time, to then work back and consider system services, products we need to incentivise and to ensure the right long term investment signals are there. We know how important System Services are now and into the future for a stable, secure electricity system.
- Comment from **Member** emphasising the need for a focus on what is needed to ensure stability and investment in the industry and the economy. Feeling that we are looking for solutions in the moment and the market we have is backward-facing, but we must look forward more.
- **Member** continued that we are the canary in the coalmine on renewable integration but not on market reforms required to help in said integration.
- Question from **member** around impact of demand customers on operational needs.

Table 2: Networks & Public Engagement – A Single Regulatory or Policy Change to Accelerate Grid Delivery
Presenter: Member
Key Points:

- This came back to investment and for both demand and generation, it comes back to infrastructure.
- The first piece was implementation of the new planning act, raising the bar for judicial reviews, for projects passing the public interest test.
- A Council member queried whether CPO rights for EirGrid in terms of acquiring land could accelerate delivery.
- On delivery, the table discussed state engagement with the supply chain. There are examples in GB, Europe and elsewhere where the state can engage with large manufacturers of switchgear, transformers etc to accelerate implementation upon approval of planning. There have been times where it can take years to procure these; how do we get ready to hit the ground running, once planning comes through.
- In terms of co-ordination of infrastructure delivery. For example could the TSOs engage with other state agencies with similar linear infrastructure needs? There are projects where an agency is going to get consent anyway, could two or more state agencies with similar needs work together to realise efficiencies and reduce impact on local stakeholders? Greenways, rail infrastructure, bypasses, there could be a co-ordinated state agency approach to planning for future. Noted underground cables are not always technically possible for many reasons.
- Members discussed how the Interim Guidance on HV Cables Installations in Public Roads arising from the HV Forum does not align with EirGrid specifications for cables and that this is posing difficulties for developers.

Table 3: Markets – FASS and Barriers to Entry, Innovation Opportunity and System Value
Presenter: Member
Key Points:

- The table was tasked with identifying barriers to entry for new participants as we move toward implementation of Future Arrangements for System Services (FASS). Barriers discussed included complexity of FASS, potential revenues, demand-side units participation, non-reserves, investment signals, technology revenue
- FASS, there were questions raised around compliance vs needs of system
- There was a small amount of discussion on what is delivered in the Strategic Markets Programme – Balancing Market Reform and the question was raised around potential revenue streams.
- On delivering Consultation, what will be the incentives. Price/caps
- Is there a Grace Period between schedule and delivery? Long-term investment signals concerns as FASS will move Ancillary Services to a Day Ahead Auction. How will it relate to the Day Ahead Market.
- Discussion around whether FASS is delivering the Future needs of the system.

Table 4: Online
Presenter: Eoin Kennedy
Key Points:

- This table highlighted LDES and dispatchable consumption as important areas for future power system flexibility and renewables integration.
- There was discussion on public engagement with industry members suggesting engagement with political stakeholders earlier in the process to assist with getting public buy-in.
- Operations and Markets were discussed together, with discussion around the cost of constraints through imperfection charges and the need to consider what is driving constraint and potential market solutions, such

as storage. Industry members suggested considering how LDES or DCUs could alleviate constraint and potentially defer grid build.
- Finally, there was a discussion around the demand facility fault ride through issue and the TSOs' plans to bring forward a Grid Code modification with new fault ride through requirements.

Presentation: *RAs Update: SEM-C Strategy Overview*

Presenters: Robert O'Rourke (CRU) and Marie-Therese Campbell (UR)

- A dual presentation by the CRU (Commission for Regulation of Utilities) and UR (Utility Regulator)
- **Marie-Therese** walked through their approach to developing a refreshed SEM-C Strategy, with a focus on a sustainable electricity market that delivers for consumers in Ireland and Northern Ireland through accountability, transparency and professionalism.
- **Marie-Therese** highlighted the importance of delivering low carbon outcomes, maximising confidence and transparency in the market through the market monitoring unit for example.
- The objectives are market analysis, analysing SEM in light of market trends, energy policy, regulatory development, future direction and stakeholder engagement with industry, Government and other stakeholders.
- The refreshed strategy will include a plan with timelines, owners etc. It will cover from now out to 2030 and beyond.
- **Robert** introduced the current approach to strategy development, which is expected to be published by early 2026. The strategy development covers 4 phases: phase 1 considers global, European and All-Island trends and context, phase 2 seeks to engage with all stakeholders to capture views on current SEMC strategy, phase 3 sees the strategy development take place including the mission, values, vision, objectives and actions. Phase 4 of the approach to strategy development considers the need for an annual refresh of strategy in light of trends and a changing global, European and all-island environment.
- Comment from **Member** around the complexity of the challenge facing the RAs and the need for a thoughtful strategy which ensures effective delivery of the required changes. Member further emphasised the importance of not underestimating the decisions and actions in terms of what we are trying to do tomorrow.
- Response from **RAs** that they agree and expressed the need for value in terms of investment and outcome. Focus on structure to give clarity to stakeholders and the need for proper prioritisation of projects in close engagement with stakeholders.

Presentation: *EirGrid Dispatch Down Working Group Update*

Presenters: Marc Senouci and Laura Mehigan

- **Marc Senouci** introduced the objective and high level terms of reference for the Working Group, including items that are in and out of scope. He presented the list of Renewables and EirGrid members taking part in the Working Group.
- **Laura Mehigan** highlighted the key topics covered by the Working Group so far as well as those to be included in the remaining Working Group meetings. Both Laura and Marc requested that any industry members that were interested in presenting solutions with the Working Group that they would be welcome to present at either of the solutioning workshops due to take place in October.

Presentation: *Northern Ireland: Minimum Units On (MUON)*

Presenters: David McGowan, Head of Future Power Systems, SONI and Gareth McLorn, Senior Lead - Future Power Systems, SONI

- **David McGowan** introduced the work that his team (Future Power Systems) has been leading on regarding analysis for the potential lowering of the three-set, minimum units on, transmission constraint group that presently prevails for the operation of the power system in Northern Ireland.
- **David** introduced the operational policy framework and change review process that supports this work, underpins the development of analysis and preparation towards physical trial and presented an overview of accompanying advancements and supporting projects in this space, including the rollout of the Low Carbon Inertia Services (LCIS) program.
- **Gareth McLorn** expanded upon David's initial points to outline the contemporary factors that drove the need for undertaking studies to support a reduction in the number of must-run plant in Northern Ireland from 3 to 2. These included the aftermath of Storm Darragh and the prospective reliance of Northern Ireland's power system upon the operation of run-hour limited plant.
- Gareth continued to set out the method for undertaking the studies, proposing an approach for generating large numbers of representative, synthetic power flow case from a small number of real-world, low inertia

snapshots (taken from the TSOs' repository of archived LSAT information). He presented the results from almost 2,000 representative power flow studies.

- It was shown that while reducing the number of must run sets in Northern Ireland, from 3 to 2, serves to lower the jurisdictional level of system inertia and reduces the export capability of the N/S tie-line (for reasons of frequency stability), the accompanying reduction in the collective minimum generation level of conventional plant in Northern Ireland shall assist in increasing the opportunity available for RES generation, via lower levels of dispatch down. Moreover, this opportunity is expected to be further advanced by the rollout of Low Carbon Inertia Services (LCIS).

Final Comments and reflections

- Encouraged continued efforts to overcome challenges.
- **Moderator** closed with a thank you and farewell to all.

Schedule of Advisory Council Meetings in 2026

- 5th March 2026 in Dublin
- 14th May 2026 in Dublin
- 17th September 2026 in Dublin

Meeting Actions

#	Topic	Action	Owner	Due
1	Dispatch Down Solution Workshop Input	Interested Industry members to make contact, around presenting at the Dispatch Down solutioning workshops		