



An Coimisiún
um Rialáil Fónas
**Commission for
Regulation of Utilities**

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The Networks Stakeholder Engagement (NSEE) Panel Close-out Report 2019

(In accordance with PR4 Decision on Reporting and
Incentives CER/18/087)

Report

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1. Introduction

This document is structured in four sections. **Section one** provides an overview of the process and purpose of the Panel. **Section two** outlines the Panel's conclusions on ESBN's performance, the scores given for each category and the overall recommendations. **Section three** outlines the Panel's conclusions on EirGrid's performance, the scores for each category and the overall recommendations. **Section four** summarises the Panel members recommendations in relation to the Panel Process itself. The minutes of both Panel meetings are in the annex of this Close-out Report.

1.1. Overview of the Process

The CRU PR4 Incentive Framework (CER/18/087), requires the System Operators (SOs) to publish a report on the effectiveness of their stakeholder engagement strategies for consultation, by the 31 March each year. The CRU decides on the annual allowed network revenues by the end of June each year. As the incentive payments are an input to this decision, the Panel's assessment and its meetings will take place between April and June each year. It is envisaged that the Panel would meet at least two times during this period.

In 2020, for the assessment and scoring exercises of the SOs performance during 2019, the Panel met twice. The first meeting took place on the 15th of May 2020; the Panel discussed their initial views on the stakeholder engagement performance of ESBN and EirGrid. Both companies then gave a presentation to the Panel, providing an overview of their stakeholder engagement submissions and addressing comments received from the consultation process. The second meeting took place on the 22nd of May 2020; the Panel agreed on the final scores for both SOs, conclusions and recommendations.

This 2019 NSEE Close-out Report details the Panel's discussions, the scores given to the SOs, the conclusions and recommendations. Also, the Panel members recommendations on the process itself are included¹.

1.2. Relevant Papers

CRU's Decision on Reporting and Incentives under PR4, [CER/18/087](#).

CRU's Decision on the Terms of Reference of the Networks Stakeholder Engagement Evaluation Panel, [CRU/19/058](#).

[ESBN's Stakeholder Engagement Report 2019](#).

[EirGrid' Stakeholder Engagement Report 2019](#).

The CRU 2018 NSEE Panel Close-out Report, [CRU/19/105](#).

¹ The CRU's views are not included in this Close-out Report.

1.3. Glossary of Abbreviations and Terms

Abbreviation or Term	Definition or Meaning
BAU	Business As Usual
DSO	ESB Networks
PR5	The Price Review 5
SOs	System Operators
TSO	EirGrid
The NSEE Panel (“the Panel”)	The Networks Stakeholder Engagement Evaluation Panel, as established by the CRU and made up by stakeholders.
The 2019 Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (“the Strategy” or “the Plan”)	The TSO and DSO, separate, strategy or plan for the relevant year, i.e. 2019.
The 2019 Stakeholder Engagement Report (“the Report”)	The TSO and DSO, separate, report setting out the effectiveness of their strategy/plan for 2019.
The stakeholder engagement reports (“the reports”)	The TSO and DSO, separate, annual reports setting out the effectiveness of their annual strategies/plans.

1.4. Members of the Panel

The CRU attendees:

- Jim Gannon; Karen Trant; Robert O’Rourke; Esther Fructuoso Márquez.

The Panel members attendees:

- Andrew Keane (UCD)
- Deirdre de Bhailís (Dingle Creativity and Innovation Hub, Energy Community)
- Donal Flavin (IDA Ireland)
- Jagtar Basi (ESB G&T, representing the EAI)²
- Julie-Anne Hannon (BGE)
- Noel Cunniffe (IWEA)
- Teresa Fallon (Electric Ireland)

² The EAI did not take a position in relation to the scoring for ESNB’s performance. Instead, it was ESB G&T who participated in the assessment and scoring process for the DSO.

2. Evaluation of ESNB by the Panel

The Panel members views on the three categories: quality of the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, implementation and effectiveness, are summarised below. The conclusions, key messages and overall recommendations follow.

2.1. Category A: Quality of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Overall, the Panel considered that improvements relative to last year have been made; and this is reflected in the score provided.

The publication of the Stakeholder Engagement Framework was welcomed by the Panel. However, the Panel agreed by consensus that the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy should be published early in the year being reported on, following engagement with stakeholders; or if possible, late in the previous year being reported on to give full sight of stakeholder engagement plans in advance of the year beginning. In particular, a member of the Panel highlighted that this really is the only way of ensuring that the “plan” encompasses all types of stakeholders’ needs and concerns which in turn will enable better tailoring and planning in terms of regularity and methods of engagement. The Panel noted that the Strategy should set the tone and expectations, detailing targets against which performance will be assessed later in the process.

The Panel appreciated that feedback given last year was taken into account by ESNB. The members of the Panel noted that as the NSEE Panel process evolves, there will need to be a continual improvement on how the SOs engage with stakeholders, and as such the mark/baseline of the Panel will increase with the years. The Panel expects that future reports will continue to evolve, based on feedback provided during this process and learnings and insights from stakeholder engagement.

It was noted by the Panel that overall, there is adequate progression regarding ESNB’s stakeholder engagement approach and the layout and structure of the Report were very good. The inclusion of principles and methodologies for engagement and the clear internal commitment to stakeholder engagement development (e.g. application of AA1000 standards) were welcomed by the Panel. The Panel recommends that ESNB includes in future reports the list and timing of the engagement events planned for the relevant year, similarly to EirGrid’s approach.

Several members of the Panel highlighted that the selection of case studies was very comprehensive. However, the Panel noticed that balance views should be included in the reports and ESNB should also highlight negative outcomes arising from stakeholder engagement examples, from which learnings have been adopted.

The Panel noted a dearth of information on how the DSO works and communicates with EirGrid in the Report, given they are a key stakeholder of the organisation. This concern was addressed by ESNB at the presentation, where they described the working arrangements between both SOs. The Panel welcomed clarifications on the close nature of the working relations between the two SOs but consider that the SOs are key stakeholders to each other and interactions between them should be called out in future reports. This should include examples of good practice and learnings as the relationship continues to evolve.

As last year, the Panel members welcomed the DSO's presentation and considered that it added positively to their understanding of the DSO's stakeholder activities. The involvement of senior management in the process was welcomed and encouraged by the Panel. Furthermore, the Panel welcomed the establishment of a senior manager within the business with responsibility for stakeholder engagement; the Panel felt that the value of this is reflected in the improvement recorded.

Some members of the Panel considered that the metrics included in the Report were very clear and comprehensive in areas such as customer experience and safety. However, the Panel agreed that the measures of success should include a wider range of stakeholders, for example suppliers. A member of the Panel also raised that any adjustment to engagement approaches during the year should be included future reports.

The Panel agreed that the impact of stakeholder engagement should be quantified insofar as possible, this is explained in more detail in the next sections. In particular, a member of the Panel raised that ideally, all future plans should include a quantitative estimate wherever possible (and otherwise, a qualitative explanation) of the benefits that the specific project, issue, or BAU engagement process will bring in terms of delivering value for customers and/or consumers, e.g. cost/ tariff reductions or avoidance (DUoS), improvement of services, system outcomes, etc.

The members of the Panel also wished to see greater emphasis on the BAU aspects of the DSO's activities in future reports, e.g. disconnection processes, meter operations and industry groups.

Agreed score for the quality of the Strategy: **7.5**.
(The previous year's score was 6.5).

2.2. Category B: Implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Overall, the Panel considered that improvements relative to last year have been made; and this is reflected in the score provided.

The Panel agreed that there were areas of stakeholder engagement where the DSO performed well with the innovation forums, and the engagement that these delivered, noted in particular. Also, the Panel recognised that ESBN appears to be good at engaging in certain areas, such as safety and storm management and has also made a positive start to the roll out of smart meters. One member of the Panel highlighted that the reports should show how the initiatives for stakeholder engagement, such as the innovation forums, are open to a wide range of stakeholders.

The Panel outlined that there was evidence of good stakeholder engagement on the Price Review 5 (PR5). In particular, a member of the Panel highlighted that the workshops style for the meetings appears to have been run well.

The range of case studies presented were welcomed by the Panel as they showed the range of engagement channels, and how these had been tailored to implement the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. The Panel also noted the step change in stakeholder engagement in Dingle.

Some members stated that it was clear from the Report and the consultation responses that the DSO, when engaged on various projects, is very good at providing high quality engagement with stakeholders.

An area noted for improvement, as raised by a member of the Panel, is the communication involved in the process for grid connection. In particular, the communication around the connection offer and the connection projects processes should be improved going forward. The Panel also pointed out that there still appears to be some misalignment between ESBN and EirGrid in terms of progressing grid delivery works and that there is room for improvement in this area.

The Panel members recognise that there is room for improvements to be made to ESBN's website, as stakeholder engagement is not clearly evident. Though, it is noted by the Panel that ESBN is planning to upgrade its website. On this, a member of the Panel raised that a consultations roadmap could be made available on ESBN's website detailing the different opportunities for stakeholders to engage with ESBN throughout the year³. Also, another member of the Panel outlined that there could be a registration for a consultation notifications option and advanced search options.

Regarding lessons learned, the Panel would welcome to see in future reports how learnings from specific engagement activities feed into the overall Strategy. Also, the Panel raised that there should be evidence in the reports of a two-way communication between ESBN and stakeholders – in effect, a demonstration of how ESBN provides feedback to stakeholders on how their involvement has added value to ESBN's approaches to the relevant projects/processes which were the subject of the consultation exercise/stakeholder dialogue.

Agreed score for implementation of the Strategy: **7.75**.
(The previous year's score was 7.0).

2.3. Category C: Effectiveness of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Overall, the Panel considered that improvements relative to last year have been made; and this is reflected in the score provided.

The Panel agreed by consensus on the need to quantify the impacts of stakeholder engagement insofar as possible. It was highlighted by the Panel members that there should be inclusion of a good range of metrics and measures of success going forward. Also, the measures of success should include a wide range of stakeholders and should evolve based on the learnings that emerge from projects.

The Panel recognised the positive impact of projects such as safety, smart metering, the innovation forums, Dingle and PR5, where the DSO's stakeholder engagement was effective.

Several members of the Panel raised that a more balanced view of the impacts of engagement areas/projects is needed. There is lack of information on where things may not have gone as

³ Similar to the process initiated by EirGrid in 2020.

well as planned and how negative outcomes are captured, developed and disseminated internally as lessons learned.

It was raised by several members of the Panel that ESNB should better demonstrate how they take the consultations feedback, received from stakeholders, into consideration and how the DSO closes the “consultations loop”. Also, the DSO needs to better reflect how ongoing engagement during the process of decision-making is taken on board and included in the outcomes of the decisions. In general, more insights on the process of how ESNB takes on board stakeholders’ feedback, address issues and decide whether to include suggestions in decisions would be welcomed.

A member of the Panel highlighted that ESNB could better evidence in future reports that they have clear mechanisms in place to embed the learnings around community engagement within the business and culture of the DSO along with metrics to show that this is happening.

Agreed score for the effectiveness of the Strategy: **7.25**.
(The previous year’s score was 6.75).

2.4. Final Score given by the Panel: ESNB

Category	Panel’s Score
Quality	7.5
Implementation	7.75
Effectiveness	7.25
Final Score	7.5

2.5. Recommendations of the Panel

- 1) The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy should be published early in the year being reported on, following engagement with stakeholders; or if possible, late in the previous year being reported on to give full sight of stakeholder engagement plans in advance of the year beginning. The Strategy should set the tone and expectations, detailing targets (quantitative where possible) against which performance will be assessed later in the process.
- 2) The Panel recommends that ESNB includes in future reports the list and timing of the engagement events, including consultations, planned for the relevant time period, similarly to EirGrid’s approach. Also, the SOs are key stakeholders to each other and interactions between them should be called out more clearly in future reports.
- 3) The case studies provided by ESNB were very comprehensive; however, the Panel noticed that balanced views should be included in the reports and that ESNB should also highlight negative stakeholder engagement examples, and how these add value as lessons learned. Also, the Panel would welcome a greater emphasis, and reflection on, on the BAU aspects of the DSO’s activities in the reports.

- 4) The Panel agreed that the impact of stakeholder engagement should be quantified insofar as possible, taking into consideration aforementioned suggestions, e.g. in term of DUoS impacts for consumers or improvement in system and/or service outcomes. Also, a good range of metrics and measures of success should include a wide range of stakeholders, including for example suppliers.
- 5) The Panel highlighted that the reports should show how the initiatives for stakeholder engagement, such as the innovation forums, are open to a wide range of stakeholders.
- 6) An area of concern outlined by the Panel is the communication involved in the process for grid connection. In particular, the communication around the connection offer and the connection projects processes should be improved going forward. It appears to be some misalignment between ESN and EirGrid in relation to progression of grid delivery works and the Panel expects this will be improved going forward.
- 7) The Panel recognises that there is scope for improvements to be made to ESN's website, taking account of aforementioned suggestions.
- 8) Regarding lessons learned, the Panel would welcome to see in future reports how learnings from specific engagement activities feed into the overall Strategy. Also, it is the Panel's view that ESN could demonstrate better in the reports that they have mechanisms in place to embed the learnings around community engagement within the business and culture of the DSO.
- 9) More insights into the process of how ESN takes on board stakeholders feedback and address issues and decide whether to include suggestions in decisions would be welcomed by the Panel. Also, the DSO needs to better reflect how ongoing engagement during the process of decision-making is taken on board and included in the outcomes of the decisions.
- 10) The Panel welcomed the DSO's presentation and the involvement of senior management in the process and encourages the DSO to continue with this approach. Furthermore, the Panel recommends that ESN carries out next year (and in future years) a self-assessment (including self-scoring), in terms of their own view on their progress on stakeholder engagement, and explain it as part of the presentation provided in the first Panel meeting.

3. Evaluation of EirGrid by the Panel

The Panel members views on the three categories: quality of the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, implementation and effectiveness, are summarised below. The conclusions, key messages and overall recommendations follow.

3.1. Category A: Quality of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Overall, the Panel considered that improvements relative to last year have been made; and this is reflected in the score provided.

The publication of the 2019 Stakeholder Engagement Plan late in 2019 was welcomed by the Panel. However, the Panel agreed by consensus that the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy/Plan should be published early in the year being reported on, following engagement with stakeholders; or if possible, late in the previous year being reported on to give full sight of stakeholder engagement plans in advance of the year beginning. In particular, a member of the Panel highlighted that this really is the only way of ensuring that the Strategy encompasses all types of stakeholders' needs and concerns which in turn will enable better tailoring and planning in terms of regularity and methods of engagement. The Panel noted that the Strategy should set the tone and expectations, detailing targets against which performance will be assessed later in the process.

Several members of the Panel outlined that the Strategy was very comprehensive and that TSO set out clear strategic objectives for engaging with stakeholders in 2019. A member recommended that the TSO could link the Strategy to the company strategic objectives more clearly.

The members of the Panel noted that as the NSEE Panel process evolves, there will need to be incremental improvement in how the SOs engage with stakeholders, as the mark/baseline of the Panel will increase with the years. The Panel expects that future reports will continue to evolve, based on feedback provided during this process and learnings and insights from stakeholder engagement.

The introduction of new methods for providing feedback to EirGrid during 2019 was welcomed by the Panel. These new methods include customer clinics, interactive discussions at conferences/forums and webinars on specific topics such as outage planning. The Panel considered that the list and timing of engagement events was very helpful and encourage the TSO to continue including this going forward. Also, the Panel welcomes the early engagement approach by EirGrid, e.g. before their PR5 submission to the CRU.

The Panel outlined that there was little mention of ESBN in the Report. This concern was addressed by EirGrid at the presentation, where they described the working arrangements between both SOs. However, the Panel consider that the SOs are key strategic stakeholders of each other and interactions between them should be called out in future reports, including reflections on improvements and lessons learned as the relationship and their respective roles continue to evolve.

The TSO's focus on communities and landowners in the last number of years was noted and welcomed by the Panel. However, some members of the Panel raised that there is scope for

improvement as regards to identification and mapping of domestic and business customers as well as industry stakeholder groups. Also, several members of the Panel considered that EirGrid's focus beyond infrastructure delivery would be beneficial. Several members of the Panel highlighted that although the TSO's engagements are outlined in the Strategy, how input and feedback is taken into account, and incorporates into the decision-making process is still somewhat unclear. Also, it was raised by a member of the Panel that it is still unclear how the mechanisms to keep stakeholders informed are monitored and reported in the company.

The Panel highlighted that the selection of case studies was comprehensive and that some of the projects had been very beneficial. The Panel noticed that a balance of views should be included in the reports and EirGrid should also highlight negative stakeholder engagement examples from which lessons learned have been captured and subsequently adopted.

As last year, the Panel members welcomed the TSO's presentation and considered that it added positively to their understanding of the TSO's stakeholder activities. The involvement of senior management in the process was welcomed and encouraged.

A member of the Panel outlined that the TSO's view on BAU and success/drawbacks of BAU and improvements made/planned to address any areas of weakness, e.g. Market Operator User Group (MOUG), Balancing Market modifications committee, etc. should be included in the reports going forward.

The Panel agreed that the impact of stakeholder engagement should be quantified insofar as possible, this is explained in more detail in the next sections. In particular, a member of the Panel raised that ideally, all future engagement plans should include a quantitative estimate wherever possible (and otherwise, a qualitative explanation) of the benefits that the specific process will bring in terms of delivering value for customers and/or consumers, e.g. cost/ tariff reductions, improvement of services, system outcomes, etc. Price and affordability is key for consumers, who are key stakeholders of EirGrid; and therefore, this should be covered in the reports going forward.

Agreed score for quality of Strategy: **7.5**.
(The previous year's score was 7.0).

3.2. Category B: Implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Overall, the Panel considered that improvements relative to last year have been made; and this is reflected in the score provided.

Generally, the Panel noted that it was clear from the respondents' feedback that stakeholders were satisfied with the different channels and bilateral engagement established by EirGrid in 2019. The variety of channels, e.g. consultations, industry fora, working groups, etc. showed the application of different approaches and initiatives in place to deliver the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. The range of case studies presented were appreciated by the Panel as they showed strong evidence of implementation of the Strategy.

A member of the Panel outlined that it was not clear in the Report how the tools and mechanisms for stakeholder engagement are measured and reported within the business; and improvement in this area is encouraged. Another area for improvement relates to EirGrid

and ESN engagement as they progress with grid delivery works, as there appears to be some misalignment between both SOs.

The engagement that the 6-step process involves is appreciated by the Panel. A member of the Panel noted that not all of the 6 projects that went through the 6-step process in 2019 were reported to the same level of detail in the Report and therefore, this made difficult to assess whether all the elements of the Strategy have been implemented.

It was highlighted by the Panel that there seems to be a lack of actions taken by EirGrid post consultations to address feedback provided by stakeholders; the Panel noted that it is the TSO's plan to address this concern going forward. The Panel is of the view that EirGrid should better demonstrate how they take the feedback to consultations, as received from stakeholders, into consideration and how they close the "consultations loop".

Several members of the Panel were of the view that the lessons learned are well considered and implemented. However, some members raised that it is not fully addressed how the TSO will act upon these learnings; furthermore, the Panel would welcome to see a more extensive evaluation of lessons learned and examples of how these will be incorporated into future Strategies.

The Panel welcomed the stakeholder engagement section on EirGrid's website and appreciate EirGrid's plan for further website's review and upgrades. On this, a member of the Panel suggested that the search function could be improved, as well as the notification process for publications. Another member of the Panel was of the view that the publications made available on EirGrid's website could be improved, as sometimes these contain out of date information that is of little use to industry.

A member of the Panel outlined that engagement practices in areas such as cable design specifications, the ECP-2 process or the DS3 programme, where EirGrid organised workshops, forums and webinars, were very good and encourages EirGrid to continue these practices and translate them into other areas. The Panel noted that ongoing stakeholder engagement and follow-up in some areas of work, such as the Flex Tech engagement, are an area for potential improvement.

Agreed score for implementation of Strategy: **7.75**.
(*The previous year's score was 7.6*).

3.3. Category C: Effectiveness of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Overall, the Panel considered that improvements relative to last year have been made; and this is reflected in the score provided.

The Panel agreed by consensus on the need to quantify the impacts of stakeholder engagement insofar as possible. It was highlighted by the Panel members that there should be inclusion of a good range of metrics and measures of success going forward. Also, the measures of success should include a wide range of stakeholders and should evolve based on the learnings that emerge from projects.

As mentioned in the previous section, the vast majority of the Panel members agreed that transparency regarding how feedback to EirGrid’s consultations is taken into account in their decisions is an area where there is an opportunity for improvement.

The Panel noted that overall, the impact of stakeholder engagement was positive in 2019, as indicated in the feedback from stakeholders. In particular, the Panel members noted the very positive impact with regard to EirGrid’s engagement with communities, in terms of mobile information units and liaison officers. Also, the Panel members outlined the “line route selection across private land” as a very good example of positive stakeholder engagement impact.

It was raised by a member of the Panel that evidence of the influence of benchmarking is lacking, though it is noted that this has influenced the PR5 plans submitted to CRU.

A member of the Panel highlighted that a good example of where lessons were learned from a negative stakeholder engagement experience and improvements were made, is the communications to industry regarding the Moneypoint outage. Communication was initially slow and driven by industry but was very good by the end of the outage and a positive example for future communications between EirGrid and industry.

A member of the Panel raised that the stakeholder engagement reports should include reporting on the same key projects on which engagement is focused in the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, as it appears that some projects reported on in detail differed from the list of projects in the original Strategy.

Agreed score for effectiveness of Strategy: **7.25**.
(The previous year’s score was 6.75).

3.4. Final Score given by the Panel: EirGrid

Category	Panel’s Score
Quality	7.5
Implementation	7.75
Effectiveness	7.25
Final Score	7.5

3.5. Recommendations of the Panel

- 1) The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy should be published early in the year being reported on, following engagement with stakeholders; or if possible, late in the previous year being reported on to give full sight of stakeholder engagement plans in advance of the year beginning. The Strategy should set the tone and expectations, detailing targets (quantitative where possible) against which performance will be assessed later in the

process. Also, it is of the Panel's view that the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy could be linked to the company strategic objectives more clearly.

- 2) The Panel raised that there is scope for improvement as regards to identification and mapping of customer and industry stakeholder groups. Also, several members of the Panel considered that EirGrid's focus beyond infrastructure delivery would be beneficial. Furthermore, the Panel considers that the SOs are key stakeholders to each other and interactions between them should be called out in future reports.
- 3) The TSO should better demonstrate how feedback from stakeholders is taken into account in decisions and how EirGrid closes the "consultations loop", as well as how the tools and mechanisms for stakeholder engagement are monitored and reported within the company.
- 4) There appears to be some misalignment between ESBN and EirGrid in relation to progression of grid delivery works and the Panel expects this will be improved going forward.
- 5) The TSO's view on BAU and success/drawbacks of BAU and improvements made/planned should be included in the reports.
- 6) The Panel agreed that the impact of stakeholder engagement should be quantified insofar as possible, for example in terms of TUoS impacts for consumers as well as system and/or service improvements/ impacts. Also, a good range of metrics and measures of success should include a wide range of stakeholders.
- 7) The Panel would welcome to see a more extensive evaluation of lessons learned and examples of how these will be incorporated into future Strategies.
- 8) The Panel welcomes the section on EirGrid's website on stakeholder engagement and encourages the TSO to carry out further upgrades taking into consideration abovementioned suggestions.
- 9) The stakeholder engagement reports should include reporting on the same key projects on which engagement is focused in the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.
- 10) The Panel welcomed the TSO's presentation and the involvement of senior management in the process and encourages the TSO to continue with this approach. Also, the Panel encourages EirGrid to continue carrying out a self-assessment (including self-scoring) and to explain it as part of the presentation provided in the first Panel meeting.

4. Recommendations on the Process by the Panel members and Next Steps

As last year, the Panel members welcomed the establishment of the Panel process and agreed that generally, the process went well.

Several members raised that it would be very beneficial if the process schedule could permit a little extra time for the review of the various reports in advance of the first Panel meeting. The final material, which included the final stakeholder engagement reports from both SOs, responses to the SOs' consultations and the SOs' consultation response papers, was provided to the Panel members less than one week ahead of the first Panel meeting of 2020. The CRU will engage with both SOs next year to ensure that the final material is submitted by EirGrid and ESBN to the CRU (and from the CRU to the members) with sufficient time to allow the Panel members review it in advance of the first Panel meeting.

A member of the Panel suggested that, if the meetings are hosted remotely next year, the CRU should consider splitting the first meeting into two sessions. The CRU will take this comment on board when arranging the meetings of next and future years.

Another suggestion from a member of the Panel is that the CRU provides, after the first meeting, the ranges of the initial indicative scores for each category A-C for each SO (as submitted by each member of the Panel to CRU ahead of the first meeting), such that at the second meeting, the Panel members can focus on the reasoning for why their own initial indicative score may differ largely to the "average" or the "range" of the initial indicative scores. Furthermore, it has been suggested that at the second meeting, a small amount of time is allocated to "re-calibration" of the scores, before setting each SO's final score for each category. The CRU will consider both suggestions ahead of next year's process.

The Panel was generally of the view that the progress on stakeholder engagement, since the CRU's decision on reporting and incentives was issued, is evident and that it is clear that the SOs are taking the matter seriously. Generally, the Panel members have indicated that there is benefit in continuing with this incentive going into PR5.

The Panel members found the presentations by the DSO and TSO useful for gaining a better understanding of approaches and the context of the SOs' stakeholder engagement. The participation of the senior management teams and the commitment to the process that it demonstrated, was welcomed by the Panel. The Panel recommends that ESBN carries out next year and in future years a self-assessment (including self-scoring), in terms of their own view on their progress on stakeholder engagement, and explain it as part of the presentation provided in the first meeting. This was EirGrid's approach over the last two Panel processes and was found very helpful by the Panel members.

4.1. Next Steps

The publication of this Close-out Report concludes the process for 2020. The CRU invites the DSO and TSO to consider the conclusions and recommendations from the Panel, in order to improve their stakeholder engagement processes.

It was indicated in the ToR of the NSEE Panel, which was published in May 2019, that the membership of the Panel would be reviewed after two years and expressions of interest to join the Panel would be invited. The current members of the Panel have already been involved in two processes, 2018 and 2019. The CRU will now consider the Panel membership and the best approach going forward and will shortly inform the current members and stakeholders in general on the next steps in this regard.

The CRU would like to thank each of the Panel members for participating constructively in the process this year.

APPENDIX: Minutes of First and Second meeting

MINUTES

First NSEE Panel meeting MS Teams 15/05/2020 (10:00 – 13:15)

CRU: Jim Gannon, Karen Trant, Robert O'Rourke, Esther Fructuoso Márquez

Panel members: Noel Cunniffe (IWEA), Jag Basi (EAI), Teresa Fallon (Electric Ireland), Julie-Anne Hannon (BGE), Andrew Keane (UCD), Deirdre de Bhailís (Energy Community), Donal Flavin (IDA Ireland).

(For 2a): DSO: Liam Walsh (Strategic Engagement Manager), Orla Halpin (Stakeholder Engagement Manager), Donal Crean (Strategy & Engagement Manager), Clare Duffy (Network Development and Electrification Manager), Ellen Diskin (PR5 manager), Paul Harrington (Regulation), Stephen O'Sullivan (Regulation).

(For 2b): TSO: Liam Ryan (Chief Innovation and Planning Officer), Michael Mahon (Chief Infrastructure Officer), Bill Thompson (Head of Group Regulation), Aidan Lawlor (Head of Customers and Stakeholders), Gill Nolan (Customer Team Lead).

1. Introductions

The CRU welcomed the Panel members and thanked them for taking time in helping the CRU with this initiative and assisting the SOs to continue evolving their approaches to stakeholder engagement. Also, the CRU outlined its role as facilitator of the Panel's views.

The CRU and Panel members introduced themselves; and the Agenda and time allocations were agreed.

The members of the Panel outlined their perspectives on the SOs performance, and there was an open discussion. The members explained further the strengths and areas for improvement within the SOs' strategies. Also, some comments and feedback on the SOs' stakeholder engagement reports were discussed.

2. System Operators' presentations on Stakeholder Engagement

2a. ESBN Presentation. ESBN DSO gave a presentation to the Panel and took questions from the Panel.

2b. EirGrid Presentation. EirGrid gave a presentation to the Panel and took questions from the Panel.

3. Brief discussion and preparation for second meeting

The Panel discussed the SOs' presentations and the process for the next meeting of the Panel.

MINUTES

Second NSEE Panel meeting MS Teams 22/05/2020 (10:00 – 12:00)

CRU: Jim Gannon, Karen Trant, Robert O'Rourke, Esther Fructuoso Márquez

Panel members: Noel Cunniffe (IWEA), Jag Basi (EAI), Teresa Fallon (Electric Ireland), Julie-Anne Hannon (BGE), Andrew Keane (UCD), Deirdre de Bhailís (Energy Community), Donal Flavin (IDA Ireland).

1. Introduction / Final views and considerations of Panel members

The Agenda and time allocations were discussed and agreed. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

The members of the Panel considered that the SOs' presentations, as held at the previous meeting, added positively to their understanding of the SOs' stakeholder engagement activities.

The members outlined their final views on the overall SOs' performance regarding stakeholder engagement.

There was an open discussion where scores for each category: quality of Strategy, implementation and effectiveness, were separately agreed for the TSO and DSO. Also, the members agreed on the key messages and overall recommendations to be given to the SOs.

2. Content of the NSEE Report

The content and format of the NSEE Report was discussed and agreed. The Report will be published at the end of the process.

3. Feedback on the overall process by Panel members

The Panel welcomed the establishment of the Panel process and generally agreed that the process went well. Recommendations to improve the process, as provided by the members at the meeting and after the meeting, will be set out in the NSEE Report.

4. Next Steps

The CRU outlined the next steps, closed the meeting and thanked the Panel members for their constructive engagement in the process.