



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

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The Networks Stakeholder Engagement (NSEE) Panel Close-out Report 2020

(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 the 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 2021, for the assessment and scoring exercises of the SOs performance during 2020, the Panel met twice. The first meeting took place the 27 May 2021; 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 submission and addressing comments received from the consultation process. The second meeting took place the 4 June 2021; the Panel agreed on the final scores for both SOs, conclusions and recommendations.

This NSEE 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 Decision on Reporting and Incentives under PR4, [CER/18/087](#).

CRU Decision on the Terms of Reference and Membership of the Networks Stakeholder Engagement Evaluation Panel, [CRU/21/053](#).

[ESBN's Stakeholder Engagement Report 2020](#).

[EirGrid' Stakeholder Engagement Report 2020](#).

The CRU 2019 NSEE Panel Close-out Report, [CRU/20/106](#).

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

1.3. Glossary of Abbreviations and Terms

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

1.4. Members of the Panel

The CRU attendees:

- Jim Gannon; Karen Trant; Robert O’Rourke; Harry Molloy

The Panel members attendees:

- Andrew Keane (UCD)
- Bobby Smith (WEI)
- Conall Bolger (ISEA)
- David Lyons (Energia)
- Deirdre de Bhailís (Dingle Creativity and Innovation Hub, Energy Community)
- Donal Flavin (IDA Ireland)
- Ian Mullins (BGE)
- Jagtar Basi (EAI)
- Niall Hogan (Electric Ireland)
- Sam Harden (ESI)
- Stevie Donnelly (IT Sligo)

2. Evaluation of ESNB by the Panel

The Panel members views on the three categories: quality of stakeholder engagement strategy, implementation and effectiveness, are summarised below. The conclusions, key messages and overall recommendations follows.

2.1. Category A: Quality of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Overall, the Panel considered that the stakeholder engagement strategy was strong but had room for further improvement.

The Panel noted a number of positives with ESNB's stakeholder engagement strategy, including the publication of stakeholder feedback over the course of the year. The timeline of planned consultations was further identified by the Panel as a strong aspect of ESNB's strategy. Further potential benefit was identified in tracking progress at the end of the year against this plan. It was also noted that ESNB recognised the diversity of stakeholders across the network in its strategy although opportunity remained for continuing wider consideration of the stakeholder community for the transition to 2030. The timing of the publication of the engagement plan was also viewed by the Panel as an improvement in 2020.

The Panel recommended that the stakeholder engagement strategy would benefit through the identification of expected outcomes and measures of success. While the setting of targets and metrics was noted as an improvement to the strategy, the Panel considered it possible for ESNB to provide more details on such metrics and expand to a wider range of stakeholders.

On balance, it was determined that ESNB's stakeholder engagement strategy took on board the recommendations which were made by the Panel last year but had further room for improvement. Specifically, some participants identified the need for the development of a clear strategy on how engagement is handled by ESNB beyond the customer interface could be introduced so that stakeholders understand how their feedback is considered and addressed.

There is an opportunity for consideration of a wider stakeholder community for the transition to 2030, including companies offering energy management or flexibility services, which were not identified in the 2020 report, as well as a demonstration of the transition journey for all stakeholders to reach 2030.

The Panel consider that ESNB's strategy would have benefitted from a list of planned communications, publications, and consultations for the year and an exercise to measure success at the end of the year would be to compare actual engagements against activities and timelines planned at the start of the year. This would allow for greater clarity on how success is measured at the end of the year.

The sentiment of constructive feedback, both positive and negative, from stakeholders should be clearly addressed by the DSO in any response to feedback.

Agreed score for the quality of the strategy: **7.5**.
(Last year's score was 7.5).

2.2. Category B: Implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

While the Panel recognised ESNB's response to 2019's recommendations which were welcomed, new areas where potential improvement of the implementation of the strategy were identified. The Panel generally recognised ESNB's attempts to better engage with stakeholders throughout 2020, however the Panel identified inconsistencies in the engagement process with different sets of stakeholders throughout ESB Networks. The customer managers were identified as a positive addition to the engagement process around generator connections, but some Panel members noted that sometimes it was unclear how messages and feedback was processed internally by ESNB when passed from the customer to the customer manager, and specifically when feedback moves beyond the customer manager where internal communication processes appear to fall down.

The Panel noted a lack of clarity in how feedback to consultations was considered. It is recommended that in the future, additional focus is given to developing a feedback process with increased transparency and engagement. Improvements to closing the feedback loop by ESNB were requested, specifically that ESNB's response to feedback should be less general and more specifically identify how feedback has been addressed internally and its impact on internal processes. This will ensure that stakeholders have been heard and that any responses to consultations have been fully considered.

The Panel recommends that additional facility on the pre-connection process would be beneficial to stakeholders. Workshops on connection specifications or standards, as well as clearly available information on the ESNB website to this effect would improve the pre-connection engagement process. The Panel noted that while some improvements had been made to ESNB's website, to improve the search function or to ensure that all open consultations are held in one specific place for stakeholder access.

The Panel suggested that ESNB ensure that the customer experience on the generation side is made consistent with the experience on the demand side as there is currently an inconsistency between the two. Due to the transitioning nature of the electricity system, the Panel recognises the need for a growing focus on the increasingly different and growing set of stakeholders connected at a distribution level. The Panel suggested that a customer satisfaction survey for generators with KPIs would be a useful tool to measure outcomes. This would measure and incentivise improvements in outcomes for generators connecting to the system.

The Panel identified a number of positives in ESNB's implementation of stakeholder engagement across 2020. These include the incorporation of stakeholder engagement into business-as-usual and the reporting against planned activities. It was recognised that ESNB adapted strongly to the COVID-19 restrictions. On the innovation-side, the Panel commended the Innovation Stakeholder Panel and the Innovation Webinar series which ran in Spring and Autumn. The implementation of network capacity heat maps and engagement with the lean connection project teams were also identified as positives of ESNB's engagement implementation. It was noted that engagement with ESNB's community liaisons was open and comprehensive. ESNB's "Keeping the Nation Humming" campaign was also recognised as a success in 2020.

On balance the team recognised the strengths of EBSN's continuing stakeholder engagement implementation but noted that additional transparency, and consistency across the engagements with stakeholders is required for future years. Metrics are an area for improvement in order to capture a holistic and complete view of a wider range of stakeholder sentiment on engagement which was a recommendation of the NSEE Panel in response to 2019 performance. Opportunities remain to improve metrics related to engagement with suppliers. Certain aspects of the supplier stakeholder engagement (for example, the National Smart Metering Programme) demonstrated opportunities for improvements to meet expectations.

The Panel noted that project-level updates were difficult to obtain and there was a lack of certainty over the timeframe for issues being resolved. Similarly, greater communications on invoicing and earlier issuing of same was requested. In some cases, it was unclear where specific projects sit within EBSN's processes.

The Panel requested greater evidence around several areas of EBSN's engagement, specifically evidence of defined benefits resulting from greater time and resource allocation to initiatives such as the Lean Connections and Active System Management programmes. Greater evidence of market improvements in interactions between the DSO and TSO was also requested, particularly around how pass-through costs are communicated to generators. Further, the Panel noted a lack of evidence in how EBSN are seeking to address "low-hanging fruit" in terms of efficiency gains.

Feedback on the level of interaction and willingness to engage on the Lean Connection Project has been positive to date. The Panel suggests that success metrics for the project are clearly defined and quantified in terms of timeline and cost reductions benchmarked against legacy grid connections.

Agreed score for implementation of the strategy: **7.25**.
(Last year's score was 7.75).

2.3. Category C: Effectiveness of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

The Panel noted that while there are clear indications that EBSN made efforts to improve the effectiveness of their engagement in 2020, it was difficult in some instances to see evidence of these improvements on the ground. In particular, the Panel identified uncertainties in costs and work programmes associated with connections and the negative impact that such uncertainties have on developers. Similarly, while EBSN recognise in their strategy, the importance of the DSO-TSO relationship, it was difficult to see the impact of this on a working basis. Delays were experienced in relation to grid delivery programmes, both DSO and TSO connected, which are critical for projects attempting to meet RESS timelines. Further detail in future reports would be welcome on how enhanced engagement with EirGrid has delivered increased benefits in terms of project delivery, connections and renewable integration. The Panel also expressed concern over the length of time taken to receive a connection date. Issues also remained in 2020 regarding a lack of transparency and inconsistencies on the part of EBSN in relation to the level of engagement and information provided when progressing generator connections.

The Panel noted that in some cases there was a misalignment or inconsistency in communications throughout the delivery of a project (e.g., earlier engagement with the Telecoms unit within ESBN to ensure that planning requirements for communications equipment do not arise late in a project’s life cycle or differing outcomes arising from engagement with different personnel within the organisation).

The Panel noted that in some cases RESS-1 projects with planned connection dates in 2021, had not received work plans as late as May 2021. Similarly, in some cases customers requested invoices for second-stage payments in August 2020 and had not received same as of May 2021, nor received information on when the invoices might issue.

Limited communication was also noted in cases where commercial customers have applied for connection of rooftop generation and faced 18-month waits on information on whether or not they could connect. Finally, limited communication was received by project developers about what stage a project was at within the internal approvals process, and limited certainty was available around cost divergences.

The Dingle Project was identified by the Panel as a strong example of DSO engagement with stakeholders and one which ESBN should strive to replicate on a national basis. The Panel also recognised ESBN’s response to recommendations from last year’s Panel.

The Panel also reflected on the fact that through metrics and target-setting that ESBN has challenges themselves in their strategy which was welcomed. Although it was recognised that the metrics were supplied, there was an ask to provide greater reflection on how the metrics had changed and why, reflecting and reporting on learnings from any failure of engagement strategies. The Panel believes that this will give a more balanced assessment being developed by ESBN although certain project failures had been reported.

Agreed score for effectiveness of the strategy: 7.
(Last year’s score was 7.25).

2.4. Final Score given by the Panel: ESBN

Category	Panel’s Score
Quality	7.5
Implementation	7.25
Effectiveness	7.0
Final Score	7.2

2.5. Recommendations of the Panel

- 1) The Panel recommends that ESBN’s future strategies should include clearer details as to how success in stakeholder engagement is measured and what successful outcomes look like.

- 2) The Panel recommends that ESNB consider how their website and accessibility can be further improved to make navigating and finding documents more straightforward. It was recognised by the Panel that ESNB's website has the potential to function a central hub for stakeholder engagement. This could include more evidence of the use and impact of benchmarking activities by ESNB on its stakeholder website. All open consultations should be kept in one place, and all publications linked under a single topic should be grouped as such. Finally, the Panel recommends a subscription service for email notifications of all ESNB publications.
- 3) The Panel recommended that additional information on the ESNB website around connection policy, and connection standards could assist third parties. An example of this would be the availability of technical specifications on the website to allow customers to adequately contest.
- 4) One of the key concerns identified by the Panel was the need for additional clarity on how feedback is considered internally by ESNB. This relates to feedback received through both public consultations and from customer managers. This includes where feedback has not necessarily been taken on board by ESNB but has clearly been considered and responded to. ESNB responses to stakeholder feedback should reflect the sentiment of stakeholders, and outline how the feedback will be addressed and the influence that this feedback might have.
- 5) Another key concern of the Panel's was consistency across the engagement process. This includes both consistency across different teams and workstreams in ESNB, as well as consistency with how ESNB engage with demand and generation customers.
- 6) Metrics used for assessing stakeholder engagement performance could be more holistic and expanded to capture more stakeholders. Consumer benefits and impacts need to be considered more through quantitative metrics which demonstrate the value being delivered through engagement activities. The Panel also recommended that ESNB might consider greater focus on metrics which were not as positive as originally expected and present a view on what might not have worked and reasons for this.
- 7) The Panel recommends earlier engagement during the connection process to address uncertainty around project timelines and costs. Pre-connection workshops or clinics were identified as an area with significant potential value to stakeholders and one which ESNB should consider implementing in the future.
- 8) While the Panel recognises ESNB's attempts to improve the stakeholder engagement process, it is important that the results of these improvements and measures taken are experienced by stakeholders on the ground.
- 9) The Panel noted that in some instances engagement with stakeholder groups was good but ESNB did not talk about or detail this in their report. This could be expanded on in future reports to better demonstrate some of the positive outcomes to stakeholder engagement.
- 10) The success of the impact of improvements advised by the Panel, such as dealing with stakeholder feedback, should be evidenced in the next stakeholder report.

- 11) The inclusion of a customer satisfaction survey for generation customers including KPIs to measure outcomes. This could be a way to measure and incentivise improvements in the outcomes for generators connecting to the system.
- 12) The Lean Connection Project is a positive innovative step by ESNB. The Panel suggests that the success metric for this project are quantified in terms of timeline and cost reductions benchmarked against legacy grid connections where possible.
- 13) The Panel would welcome a forum between the TSO, DSO, and the regulator to address connection challenges in one place instead of oscillating between different organisations, with everyone in the room to address common issues.
- 14) Clearer project-level updates could be made available at regular intervals with greater certainty provided to customers via firmer information on costs and timing made available earlier in the project life-cycle.
- 15) The Panel requests that more evidence of the benefits achieved through greater DSO-TSO interaction is made available.
- 16) The Panel requests that ESNB make a commitment to communication process improvements through the implementation of “low-hanging fruit” rather than deferring improvements to future programmes.

3. Evaluation of EirGrid by the Panel

3.1. Category A: Quality of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Overall, the Panel considered that improvements relative to last year have been made; and recommendations made by the Panel were taken on board. However, there were also areas of concern identified by the Panel which will be important for EirGrid to address in future strategies.

The timing of the publication of EirGrid's stakeholder engagement plan was improved from 2019 and the Panel recognised the high quality and accessibility of the strategy. The plan could still be brought out earlier (consultation closed April 2020), it would be helpful, if possible, to see the plan released for comment in December/January. The Panel also welcomed the list of planned consultations included in EirGrid's publication. Potential value was recognised in tracking progress of publications against this plan at the end of the year.

It was recommended that in the future, the strategy provides more clarity on engagement tools and measures for success and that the strategy document is updated to make it more of a living and evolving strategy. Panel members considered it important for the TSO to set themselves a target with regards to engagement metrics and outcomes.

Agreed score for quality of strategy: **7.5**.
(Last year's score was 7.5).

3.2. Category B: Implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

While the Panel recognised EirGrid's responses to last year's recommendations, a number of concerns around implementation of stakeholder engagement were identified. EirGrid's "Stepping Up" campaign and the use of dedicated community liaisons were identified as highlights of EirGrid's implementation. The Panel noted that flexibility in response to COVID-19 was strong in 2020. EirGrid's pre-connection customer clinics were also recognised as a strong aspect of stakeholder engagement. Communications round the RESS auction process were noted as a positive in 2020 with regular calls and updates to the wider industry.

Another highlight of EirGrid's engagement was the introduction of the customer survey, and the Panel looks forward to seeing how the outputs and recommendations from this are communicated and feed into EirGrid's activities.

A key issue raised by the Panel was implementation on the FlexTech initiative, for which there was very little activity over 2020, this was noted as particularly disappointing by the Panel.

While it appears that the TSO recognises the need for increased cooperation with the DSO, it is not clear yet what the results or benefits of increased engagement have been. The Panel also identified ongoing issues with work practices between EirGrid and ESNB in 2020, where little improvement has been seen on previous years, such as a lack of transparency and frustration for generators on programmes and engagement processes which have contributed to a lack of clarity for projects. This is an area which could be captured through the development of focused metrics, but also an activity which needs to be felt on the ground. This was one of a number of areas where the TSO seems to recognise a need for improvement,

but it remains unclear what actions are being taken to address same and how these have facilitated greater success in terms of renewable connections and infrastructure delivery.

The Panel considered there to be a slight divergence in terms of the strategy and implementation of engagement and at times, the experience of customer engagement was inconsistent with the stated intention of the engagement strategy. Similarly, there was evidence of a small degree of inconsistency in terms of the availability of information, in some cases it was challenging to obtain project-level updates from the TSO.

Another concern the Panel identified was in cases where there was engagement, the output did not always reflect the responses to the TSO, earlier engagement with stakeholders to develop possible future scenarios before these are presented as possibilities could be adopted. This would help to cultivate an approach of meaningful engagement rather than simply broadcasting a message. More transparency and clarity is required in how closing the feedback loop with stakeholders is handled so that in cases where feedback is not taken on board, a clear rationale is provided and it is clear that the feedback has been considered and what the next steps will be. This can include bilateral follow-up with stakeholders, especially where requested.

EirGrid's website was an issue identified by the Panel where there is room for significant improvements. This includes better search and library functionality. The Panel further identified the potential for an expansion of the consultations page so that all open consultations are held in one place for stakeholder access. This would mean that all stakeholders can rely on the website as a single source of update for all stakeholder engagement activities.

The Panel identified a delay in issuing grid delivery programmes which are critical to ensuring that developers can meet RESS timelines.

Agreed score for implementation of strategy: **7.5**.
(*Last year's score was 7.75*).

3.3. Category C: Effectiveness of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Overall, the Panel recognised that EirGrid have taken steps and actions to improve their engagement with stakeholders but that in some cases this has not been reflected by an actual impact on the ground. The integration of lessons learned needs to be more transparent and demonstrate the success (or not) of proposed actions and how they are incorporated into future strategies.

A key concern raised by the Panel was the lack of information such as work programmes and maintenance breaks which make it difficult to schedule works. Some of this information is essential for RESS projects which make bids based on assumptions of when they can connect. As well as this, clearer and earlier engagement on detailed connection costs is sought to reduce the level of uncertainty which developers are exposed to.

As noted above, the FlexTech initiative was identified as a disappointment by the Panel. Little happened in relation to FlexTech over 2020 despite the commitments made by the TSO. While some of this may be attributable to COVID-19, the messaging around FlexTech was not clear to stakeholders and no updates or information was provided on the status of the initiative.

The Panel requested that information while processing connections requires additional clarity including connection method and cost. It was noted that in some instances pass-through costs associated connections have risen with little transparency as to the driver. This created an impression of shifting goalposts.

The Panel consider it necessary to ensure in future years, that measures taken in relation to the quality and implementation of stakeholder engagement translate into an impact across the TSO's activities. More focus is needed to show a wider range of quantified value delivery outcomes for stakeholders where possible, be that customer outcomes or system outcomes. Some of the opportunities for improvement that remain include clarity on closing the feedback loop with stakeholders, continued development of the website, and quantifying value of delivery for stakeholders.

The report provided a percentage increase in projects progressed in 2020 due to improved engagement with the DSO. The Panel would like to see this percentage increase broken down into categories such as demand connections, generator connections, and network reinforcements.

In general, the Panel recognised the improvements and measures taken by EirGrid over 2020. However, there were a number of areas of concern around the outcome of the engagement strategy which the Panel considered needed to be improved and reflect the improvements and changes to the strategy and implementation of stakeholder engagement. Year-on-year performance expectations of stakeholders and the Panel are high and it is essential that, at a minimum, all suggestions for improvements made by the Panel in the previous year are evident as being fully implemented.

Agreed score for effectiveness of strategy: **7**.
(Last year's score was 7.5).

3.4. Final Score given by the Panel: EirGrid

Category	Panel's Score
Quality	7.5
Implementation	7.5
Effectiveness	7
Final Score	7.3

3.5. Recommendations of the Panel

- 1) The Panel recommends that EirGrid set out in their strategy, tools used for engagement as well as measurable outcomes for success which can be used to track progress at the end of the year. Focused metrics may also be a useful way of tracking successes against

the engagement strategy. The integration of lessons learned should clearly demonstrate the success (or not) of proposed actions from lessons and how they are incorporated into future strategies.

- 2) In some cases, EirGrid appear to recognise the need for improvement but do not clearly set out measures taken to make these improvements. The Panel recommends that this is clearly set out in future reports and a wider range of quantified value delivery outcomes or system outcomes.
- 3) The Panel recommends that EirGrid ensure the customer experience is consistent with the intentions set out in the stakeholder plan as sometimes there appears to be a divergence between the two.
- 4) Additional transparency is requested by the Panel as to how feedback is handled and processed. In cases where feedback is not taken on board, a clear rationale for this should be available.
- 5) The Panel recommends further improvements to EirGrid's website, specifically around search functionality and the grouping of relevant documents. A build out of the Consultations section of the website should be completed so that all open consultations are held in one specific place (in date order) for stakeholder access. Additionally, all publications linked by a common topic, should be placed together on the central stakeholder portal under that topic. Finally, a subscription service for email notifications of the publications of consultations by EirGrid is recommended.
- 6) The Panel recommends that EirGrid should seek to ensure that measures taken in regard to the strategy and implementation of stakeholder engagement should translate into an impact on TSO activities on the ground.
- 7) The Panel would welcome additional clarity over work programmes and maintenance breaks. Similarly, earlier engagement on connection type and connection costs would benefit developers. Similarly increased transparency around pass-through connection costs, specifically where increasing, is welcomed.
- 8) The success of the impact of improvements advised by the Panel should be evidenced in the next stakeholder report.
- 9) EirGrid provided a percentage increase in projects progressed in 2020 due to improved engagement with the DSO. The Panel suggests that the success metrics are broken down into difference categories such as demand connections, generator connections, and reinforcements. How many ATRs have been progressed to the next step and how many have been delayed?
- 10) The Panel request that more evidence is provided of the benefits achieved through greater DSO-TSO interaction.
- 11) The Panel recommends that information on connection timelines and costs for generators needs to be provided up-front with greater certainty.
- 12) The Panel requests that EirGrid issue programmes for projects with more urgency than currently.

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

- The Panel welcome how the meetings were chaired and conversation was facilitated despite the virtual environment. Differences and divergent views were fully aired throughout the meeting and all Panel members were facilitated to make comments.
- Grid connections were a significant challenge in 2020 for both TSO and DSO and groups affected by these connections were strongly represented on the Panel. Its is important that these challenges are called out and addressed through the Panel process, but the Panel also considers the experience of the wider stakeholder community in its assessment.
- To help balance the Panel experience it may be beneficial to invite a community representative with direct engagement with both DSO and TSO in future years.
- It would be helpful to agree a scoring rationale in advance of the second meeting as arriving at a final consensus score took a considerable time during the meeting.
- Review documents provided to the Panel at least seven working days in advance of the first meeting. Prior submission deadlines for the network companies should be aligned with this.
- The provision of justified provisional scores by the Panel members for both the TSO and DSO ahead of the meeting gave the Panel more focus within meetings. This process should be maintained for future meetings.
- Along with the summary of initial scores, the Panel could be provided with the main issues identified (positive and negative) by Panel members in order to prompt discussion and allow Panel members to judge the scale of conversation needed. A live representation of the scores being discussed would help Panel members focus on their scoring views against the Panel position.
- The broadening of the Panel and addition of new perspectives is welcomed. The continued renewal of membership on a two-year basis will continue to ensure the relevance and value of the Panel. This also provides a useful experience for different Panel members who experience the perspective of different stakeholder categories which they may have not been familiar with previously.
- The Panel proposed earlier engagement with the network companies to present on their strategy and take on comments from the Panel at an earlier stage. A mid-year update was also discussed.
- The CRU should consider the nature of scoring and the impact that this will have on the purpose and effectiveness of the incentive.

4.1. Next Steps

The publication of this Report concludes the process for 2021. The CRU invites the DSO and TSO to consider the conclusions and recommendations from the Panel, in order to improve their stakeholder engagement processes.

The CRU would like to thank each of the Panel members for participating constructively in the process this year and looks forward to working with the Panel members again next year.

Appendix 1: Meeting Minutes

First NSEE Panel meeting MS Teams 27/05/2021 (14:00 – 17:00)

CRU: Jim Gannon, Karen Trant, Robert O'Rourke, Harry Molloy

Panel members: Bobby Smith (WEI), Jag Basi (EAI), Niall Hogan (Electric Ireland), Ian Mullins (BGE), Andrew Keane (UCD), Deirdre de Bhailís (Dingle Energy Community), Donal Flavin (IDA), Stevie Donnelly (IT Sligo), Samuel Harden (ESI), Conall Bolger (ISEA), David Lyons (Energia)

TSO: Bill Thompson, Gill Nolan, Suzanne Collins, Bill Thompson, Karen Lane

DSO: Stephen O'Sullivan, Paul Harrington, Orla Halpin, Liam Walsh, Clare Duffy, Ellen Diskin, John Bracken, Claire Quane, Donal Crean

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 approach to stakeholder engagement. The CRU also outlined its role as a facilitator to the Panel's views.

The CRU and Panel members introduced themselves, and the agenda was agreed.

Each member of the Panel explained their preliminary scores and the strengths and areas for improvements identified in the network company engagement. A brief discussion covered areas to ask questions on after the network company presentations.

2. Network Company Presentations

EirGrid Presentation

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

ESBN Presentation

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

3. Brief Discussion and Preparation for Second Meeting

The Panel discussed the network companies' presentations and the process for the next meeting of the Panel. The next meeting will be held on Friday 4 June 2021.

Minutes

First NSEE Panel meeting

MS Teams 04/06/2021 (10:00 – 12:00)

CRU: Jim Gannon, Karen Trant, Robert O'Rourke, Harry Molloy

Panel members: Bobby Smith (WEI), Jag Basi (EAI), Niall Hogan (Electric Ireland), Ian Mullins (BGE), Andrew Keane (UCD), Deirdre de Bhailís (Dingle Energy Community), Donal Flavin (IDA), Stevie Donnelly (IT Sligo), Samuel Harden (ESI), Conall Bolger (ISEA), David Lyons (Energia)

1. Introduction

The agenda was agreed. Slides were shared providing an overview of average scores for both network companies.

2. Final Views and Considerations of Panel Members

The members of the Panel discussed the average scores received by the network companies in each category. There was discussion on the appropriate score in the context of stakeholder experience and last year's score.

The Panel members settled on final scores. Where the network companies received scores which were the same or lower as last year, it was agreed that clear and granular rationale and feedback will be provided to the network companies.

3. Content of the NSEE Report

For next steps the CRU agreed to put together a framework report which will be shared with Panel members to provide an opportunity to input feedback, rationale and specific examples to justify the scoring.