

**IWEA response to the EirGrid Draft Grid Development Strategy - Your Grid, Your Views, Your Tomorrow**

**05 June 2015**

IWEA welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the Draft Grid Development Strategy. IWEA would like to commend EirGrid for the comprehensive approach as set out within this consultation. We consider the review to be wide-ranging, informed and informative. IWEA welcomes the openness of engagement and clarity of approach, which we feel will help ensure greater public engagement and participation with the decision making and necessary planning around our Irish energy future.

We welcome the clear focus on the case being made for a modern electricity infrastructure, fit for purpose and which will deliver for our communities, our economy and for our climate. A strong electricity grid is an essential component of any modern economy and is essential to our economy and our way of life. As outlined in the paper, more than 60% of the transmission lines on our system are more than 35 years old, and there is a need to update and maintain the infrastructure. The changing generation and demand needs of the system also need to be reflected in the new Grid Development Strategy, and IWEA welcomes these developments.

IWEA is clear in our support of a long-term strategy to develop the grid in order to ensure that a clear line of sight can be given for future energy planning, and to ensure the strongest possible environment is provided for investment from both electricity providers and energy intensive industries. It is important that the required infrastructure is delivered in a timely manner to ensure this investment can be achieved.

We welcome the commitment within Strategy Statement 1 and as outlined within Section 3, that *“Open engagement and inclusive consultation with local communities and stakeholders will be central to EirGrid’s approach to network development.”* IWEA shares this commitment to ongoing community engagement as stated through our own community engagement commitments, namely *“The Best Practice Guidelines for the Irish Wind Energy Industry”* (2012) and *“Good Neighbour: IWEA Best Practice Principles in Community Engagement & Community Commitment”* (2013).

### **Grid Strategy**

IWEA supports the work being carried out in assessing the different options for the projects under consideration to find the most suitable option. However we would highlight concerns in relation to the risk of further delay of implementation of this necessary infrastructure.

It is clear from recent developments that Ireland has been identified as a highly desirable location for data centres, as a result of our strong grid infrastructure, our climate and our excellent renewable

energy resource. It is important that the grid development strategy takes the significant increase in demand into account, and that there is capacity for growth in demand, and especially renewable electricity demand within the infrastructure plans.

### **New Transmission Technologies**

IWEA welcomes the use of new technologies that allows the best use to be made of the existing grid infrastructure including High Temperature Low Sag (HTLS), series compensation and investigation into the use of HVDC, DC and underground cabling where appropriate. IWEA supports continued investigation into new technologies which will enable more efficient use of the transmission system, or which will enable grid development in a timely manner. It is important that the solutions chosen are cost effective.

IWEA welcomes the EirGrid work on dynamic line ratings. This is an area, in which we feel there may be significant benefits and cost saving potential available. As many instances of constraint for our members are directly linked to high wind output, IWEA believes there are opportunities with dynamic line rating to alleviate constraint without monitoring technology.

### **North South Interconnector**

The North South Interconnector is a vital piece of infrastructure required to alleviate some of the bottlenecks on the all-island system and to enable more efficient operation of the all-island market. There is a significant cost associated with the lack of infrastructure between Ireland and Northern Ireland, which currently means that the most cost efficient generation cannot be run on the system. It is essential that this piece of infrastructure be delivered in a timely manner. IWEA supports the work that has been carried out on this to date and the conclusions of Independent Expert Panel that the appropriate assessments for this piece of infrastructure have been carried out.

### **Summary**

As the leading association for the Irish renewable energy sector, IWEA would consider ourselves as a proactive partner, willing to step out in explaining the benefits of an effective, modern and climate friendly Irish electricity system, and we look forward to continuing our work alongside EirGrid in this regard.