STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT REPORT

2020

ESB NETWORKS

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FOREWORD

ESB Networks has a key role to play in enabling the transition to a low-carbon society in Ireland. Our network provides electricity to over 2.3 million customers in homes, businesses, farms and communities across the country, enabling electricity to be supplied in a safe and reliable manner, and supporting economic and social development.

As the distribution system evolves to support Ireland's transition to a low-carbon economy, we will ensure that customers and stakeholders remain at the centre of our business. Listening to and engaging with customers is key to understanding their needs and preferences as to how we develop the network and deliver services.

Working collaboratively with all our customers and stakeholders, we can take positive actions together to address climate change as the key challenge of our generation. Working together, we will connect much more renewable generation to the network and enable the use of clean electricity to drive carbon in the form of fossil fuels out of heat, transport and the economy.

2020 has been a most difficult and extraordinary year for us all as we faced the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on our society, our economy and our workplaces.

As an essential service provider, ESB Networks has focussed on ensuring the continuity of a safe and reliable electricity service for our customers and communities, whilst most importantly safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our employees and customers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on all our customers and stakeholders. More than ever, we have seen the importance of having a strong stakeholder engagement strategy and approach to enable us to reach out in support of our customers, communities and stakeholder organisations.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our customers and stakeholders for taking the time to engage with us throughout the year, providing valuable feedback on our business activities and consultations.

The purpose of this report is to describe and review our stakeholder engagement approach and activities throughout 2020. This was a year in which we, together with our stakeholders and customers, have had to adjust to new ways of working, communicating and living. Together we have successfully adopted new channels to enable us to work effectively and to continue to collaborate and share ideas, while also supporting each other through this unprecedented period.

We look forward to continuing to build and strengthen our engagement and collaboration with all our customers, communities and stakeholders, so that together we can face the challenges that will enable a brighter future for all.

Paddy Hayes

Managing Director
ESB Networks

INTRODUCTION

This report is a review of ESB Networks' stakeholder engagement activity in 2020.

Section 1 provides an overview of our stakeholder engagement strategy and plan for 2020 which was published in December 2019 for public consultation.

Section 2 describes how, through ongoing collaboration with our stakeholders, we are taking on board feedback and recommendations for continuous improvement and describes how stakeholder feedback has been shaping our engagement approach and activities throughout 2020 and beyond.

Section 3 provides examples of stakeholder engagement from across ESB Networks' business to demonstrate the broad range of our engagement activities in 2020. These case studies describe the purpose or strategy of each engagement, how we implemented or carried out the engagement activities and the resulting impacts or benefits to both our stakeholders and business alike.

Section 4 describes the measures of effectiveness of our stakeholder engagement and builds on the engagement metrics introduced in 2020 in response to stakeholder feedback. Such feedback is key to understanding the extent to which our engagement objectives are met and stakeholder's satisfaction with the engagement process. In 2020, we reported on how this feedback is informing our engagement strategy.

Finally, we have included in **Section 5** a list of our engagement activities in 2020 i.e., ESB Networks consultations, publications and pathways to engagement including webinars, meetings and working groups.

We are publishing this document for consultation to allow all our customers and stakeholders an opportunity to comment on our engagement activities in 2020. We would like to hear your views of how we engaged in 2020 and how we can improve going forward. We look forward to hearing your comments and feedback which can be submitted directly to stakeholder@esbnetworks.ie.


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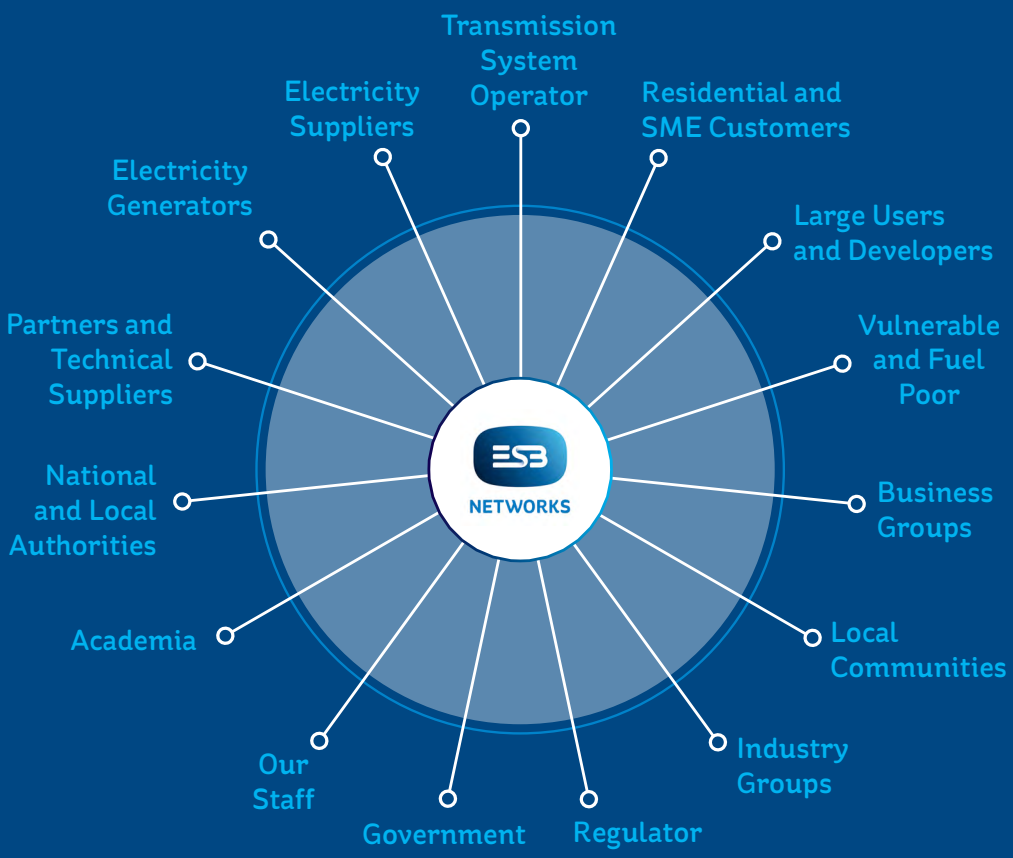
01.

OUR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

ESB Networks' '**Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Framework**' sets out our enduring engagement strategy to enable an open and ongoing dialogue with all our stakeholders. The framework identifies our stakeholders and the principles that guide our engagement, together with our proposed engagement methodology and our governance and control processes. The following section summarises the key elements of this framework as refined through stakeholder feedback and recommendations for continuous improvement.

Our stakeholders are the individuals, groups of individuals, communities or organisations that affect, or could be affected by, our activities, products or services and associated performance. Stakeholder engagement is the process whereby we actively engage with our customers and stakeholders with a clear purpose and to achieve agreed outcomes.

Given our central role in the electricity sector, providing an electricity connection to over 2.3 million customers and with interactions with a broad range of communities, organisations, representative bodies and industry groups, our engagement spans a wide range of customer types and stakeholders.



OUR APPROACH

We recognise that the engagement approach needs to be tailored to the different needs of our stakeholder groups. Our principles and methodology of engagement are guided by the AA1000 stakeholder engagement standard[1], which is used by many leading organisations and network operators. The following principles underpin all our activities when engaging with our customers and stakeholders.

Principles of Engagement

INCLUSIVITY	MATERIALITY	RESPONSIVENESS	IMPACT
Give people a say in the issues that impact them	Identify and be clear about the issues that matter	Act transparently on material issues	Engagement should positively impact customers, stakeholders and the business
We will engage widely with our customers and stakeholders	We will focus on the most relevant and significant issues that affect our customers, stakeholders and business	We will communicate and be transparent on the outcomes of the engagement process	We will monitor, measure and be accountable for the impact of our engagement actively

We use a structured and systematic approach to engaging with our customers and stakeholders. This involves a cycle of planning, action, reporting, review and improvement.

[1]*AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard (2015) and AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Principles (2018) available at: https://www.accountability.org/standards/*

Engagement Methodology

PLAN

Planning is essential for effective stakeholder engagement. During the planning phase, we identify the purpose of engagement; which stakeholders need to be engaged; the timeline for engagement; what level of engagement is most appropriate; and the resources that are required to achieve success.

ACT

This involves implementing the planned engagement activities. Briefing stakeholders in advance sets the context and improves the quality of engagement. Engagement is conducted according to agreed ground rules and outputs are documented. Following engagement, an action plan is developed that sets out how we will respond to the outputs of the engagement. Finally, we communicate the engagement outputs and action plan with stakeholders.

REPORT

Reporting on stakeholder concerns and comments is important for effective engagement. Through this process, stakeholder concerns are better understood and acted upon. Reporting can be done both formally through reports and informally through regular updates and meetings. We address the actions outlined in the action plan and inform stakeholders of the outcome.

REVIEW

We seek to continuously improve our stakeholder engagement processes and outcomes by evaluating what was successful and what could be improved. This can be determined through feedback from stakeholders and through other performance indicators.

IMPROVE

By reviewing the feedback from our customers and stakeholders, we can ensure that the lessons learned are incorporated into subsequent engagement plans.

Our strategy also reflects an understanding of the different levels of engagement (inform, involve, collaborate) which are appropriate depending on the nature and materiality of the subject of engagement. The level of engagement that is appropriate is considered during the planning phase. This involves an assessment of the materiality of the subject matter of engagement both for our stakeholders and our business and includes an evaluation of potential impact and risk. Issues of major significance, involving high levels of investment, impact and risk, (for example the Smart Metering programme and the development of tools and systems to enable active citizens/ prosumers) will warrant greater levels of engagement. Where the issue has lower significance and less impact, the provision of information may be more appropriate. In each case, we will discuss our approach with our stakeholders.

Levels of Engagement

Different levels of stakeholder engagement are appropriate, depending on the purpose, materiality, desired outcome, timeframe, resources, and level of interest.

	INFORM	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE
Characteristics	One-way engagement	Two-way engagement	Joint decision-making
Purpose	Provide information	Obtain feedback	Identify preferred solutions
Promise	Keep you informed	Listen and acknowledge	Incorporate recommendations
Tools	Documentation and media	Conferences, meetings and surveys	Workshops, seminars and surgeries

Our Governance and Control

We recognise that effective stakeholder engagement is essential for the successful management of our business. As a strategic priority, it is led by the Directors and the senior leadership team and is seen as a vital activity at every level of the organisation.

The Stakeholder Engagement Team meets regularly with the Stakeholder Leads across the business to develop engagement plans and ensure implementation using appropriate methods and levels of engagement. They also work together to monitor outcomes, measure performance, provide feedback to customers and stakeholders, and seek opportunities to improve the overall engagement process.

Managing our Stakeholder Engagement

An internal Stakeholder Engagement Steering Group made up of stakeholder leads from across the business meets regularly to discuss planned engagement activities, review stakeholder feedback and agree proposed improvements and adjustments based on recommendations. This group, which is led by the Stakeholder Engagement Team and chaired by the Managing Director, provides overall direction to the stakeholder engagement process for ESB Networks.

Stakeholder engagement forms a core element of our business processes and remains embedded in our business culture and is seen as the role and responsibility of every employee within the organisation.

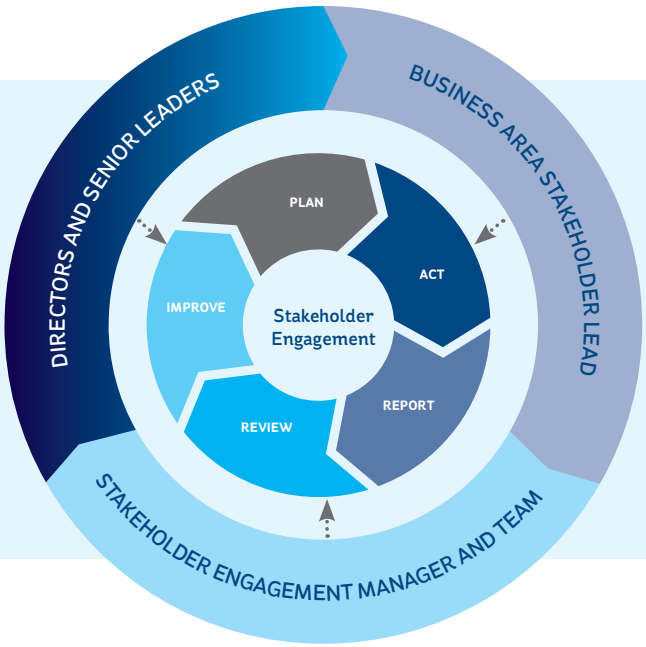


Figure 1: ESB Networks Stakeholder Engagement Governance and Control mechanism

Our Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2020

Our '**Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Plan for 2020**' was published for public consultation in December 2019. It identifies the key areas of engagement for 2020 such as the next price review period PR5 (2021-2025), Smart Metering, Connecting Renewables, Safety and Innovation which we believe to be of strategic importance to both our stakeholders and business throughout 2020.

For example, the major engagement involved in the National Smart Metering Programme is vital to the successful delivery of this major investment initiative and will help build awareness among consumers of the benefits enabled by smart meters, while the engagement supporting the PR5 planning process is key to the future sustainable development of the network, which reflects the needs of all stakeholders. We published an update to our 2020 plan in our report '**How Stakeholder Feedback is Shaping our Engagement**' showing how the feedback we received from our stakeholders together with the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, shaped our engagement approach and activity during 2020.

02.

FEEDBACK AND LEARNINGS

We value the feedback we have received to date which is enabling us to continually refine our engagement approach for the benefit of our stakeholders. Good engagement benefits our customers, stakeholders, the wider community and our business.

When we engage with each other in a genuine two-way conversation, we can learn from each other, enabling us to make better decisions and work towards mutually beneficial outcomes. Ultimately, better engagement builds stronger relationships and gives us greater opportunities to achieve our business objectives. The earlier we engage with each other, the more likely these benefits will be realised.

For our customers and stakeholders, engagement provides opportunities to contribute to projects and programmes, have their issues heard and inform the decision-making process. It gives these groups better understanding of our priorities, increased ownership of outcomes and greater capacity to engage in how electricity will be used in the future.

For ESB Networks, engagement provides insights by understanding changing priorities, tapping into specialist or local knowledge and gives us the opportunity to 'road-test' proposals or initiatives with stakeholders. It helps us identify emerging issues and risks and is central to us meeting our statutory obligations and better meeting customer needs.

Benefits For Customers and Stakeholders

- Opportunity to communicate the issues that are important for customers and stakeholders
- Open, transparent reporting on our performance
- Understanding ESB Networks' priorities
- Early awareness of ESB Networks initiatives
- Greater ability to engage on future energy issues and plan ahead
- Opportunity to voice the changing needs of customers and stakeholders
- Access to people in ESB Networks who can resolve issues
- Understanding how ESB Networks engages with communities
- Greater confidence in ESB Networks' delivery

Benefits For ESB Networks

- Ensuring the focus of our activities reflects the needs of customers and stakeholders
- Feedback contributing to our efficiency and effectiveness
- Stronger and enduring relationships
- Improved and sustainable outcomes
- Sharing of information which can influence our operations and projects
- Early identification of issues/risks
- Ability to lead and influence policy and reforms in the sector
- Strengthening our engagement culture
- Better informed regulatory proposals

During 2020, we consulted, listened and learned from our Stakeholders. We published a report '**How Stakeholder Feedback is Shaping our Engagement**' to describe how this stakeholder feedback is shaping our approach to our engagement strategy, plans and activities in 2020 and beyond. It describes how ESB Networks is interpreting stakeholders' needs and our proposed approach to ensure continuous improvement of our engagement going forward. We describe stakeholder feedback under several key themes namely: the importance of early engagement; the grid connection offer process; working with the TSO (EirGrid); how we address our feedback, pathways to engagement; engagement metrics & measuring performance; and community engagement. For each theme we outline the key recommendations and how they have informed our approach to stakeholder engagement during 2020.

ESB Networks values our stakeholders' ongoing support and feedback and we will continue to look for new and innovative ways to engage with our stakeholders to ensure strong collaboration on our initiatives and activities. Following publication of our previous report on stakeholder engagement activities in 2019, we received some valuable feedback and suggestions from which we can learn and improve.

The following section outlines this feedback and our response to the **recommendations** received from the Networks Stakeholder Engagement Evaluation (NSEE) Panel as published on the CRU website in September 2020.

FEEDBACK	LEARNINGS
"The Strategy should set the tone and expectations, detailing targets (quantitative where possible) against which performance will be assessed later in the process."	Our 2020 engagement plan sets out the high-level focus and purpose for each area of stakeholder engagement and provides qualitative measurement and outcomes. During 2020, we have sought to introduce more quantitative metrics which we included in our lookback report on stakeholder engagement for 2019. An update to our 2020 plan was included in our report '**How Stakeholder Feedback is Shaping our Engagement**' reflecting how we implemented and adjusted our strategy and plans for 2020 based on our response to COVID-19 and our stakeholder feedback. Our Strategy and Plan for 2021 provides objectives, actions and measures of success for each proposed area of engagement.
"Balanced views should be included in the reports and that ESBN should also highlight negative stakeholder engagement examples."	We agree that it is beneficial to show how negative feedback is taken onboard and used to improve our approach and develop better initiatives. For example, the case studies on the Lean connections project and the Distribution Outage Programme reflect initiatives being implemented in response to stakeholder concerns regarding time taken to connect to the distribution system and coordination of planned outage programmes.

FEEDBACK	LEARNINGS
"Include in future reports the list and timing of the engagement events, including consultations, planned for the relevant time period."	Following this recommendation in September 2020, we published on our website a listing of upcoming events and consultations for the final quarter of 2020. Our Strategy & Plan for 2021 as published in December 2020 includes a listing of our planned engagements including consultations, publications and events for 2021. These lists are also published on our website as live documents allowing us to respond to and inform our stakeholders of any changes that may be required throughout the year. This report also includes a full list of the main consultations, publications and events that took place during 2020.
"More insights in the process of how ESBN takes on board stakeholders' feedback and addresses issues and decides whether to include/ not to include suggestions in decisions would be welcomed. 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."	Through our public consultations we seek to actively inform, engage and hear from our customers and stakeholders on areas and activities across our business. During 2020, we have sought feedback through formal consultation processes on several key initiatives, including: our Innovation Strategy; Microgeneration Framework; MV Modular Substations and our Electrification of Heat and Transport strategy. Many of these consultations were supported by information webinars to facilitate better engagement and discussion of feedback. We will continue to share our analysis of feedback received externally in response papers and reports. Please refer to the tables in Section 5 for more details. In addition, an internal Stakeholder Engagement Steering Group made up of stakeholder leads from across the business provides overall direction to the stakeholder engagement feedback process.
"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."	We published ahead of 2020 (in Dec 2019) an enduring stakeholder engagement strategy document and an engagement plan for 2020. We also developed our stakeholder engagement strategy and plan for 2021 in quarter 4 2020 taking on board stakeholder feedback received throughout 2020. It was published for public consultation to allow our stakeholders to help further shape our strategy and plans for 2021 and beyond.

FEEDBACK	LEARNINGS
"Greater emphasis on the BAU aspects of the DSO's activities."	Engagement on 'business-as-usual' activities remains a key part of our overall stakeholder engagement process. Several case studies in this report focus on engagement on the daily activities that are carried out to ensure electricity gets to the homes and businesses of our 2.3 million electricity customers in a safe and efficient manner. For example, we discuss how we continued to engage on safety critical work, planned work needed for short-medium term security of supply, and critical connections work including those in response to the COVID-19 outbreak e.g., for care homes, telecoms providers, temporary hospitals, food shops, distribution centres, water/gas utilities, and customers in vulnerable situations. We discuss the importance of engagement with the public and our stakeholders on the need for outages to maintain the reliability of the network through our "Humming" campaign and how we continue to manage and minimise the impact of these outages through the Distribution Outage Programme. Engagement on our role regarding customer metering is described in the case study on "Smart Metering" and the case study on the "COVID-19 Supplier Suspension Process".
"Reports should show how the initiatives for stakeholder engagement, such as the innovation forums, are open to a wide range of stakeholders."	We recognise the importance and contribution that our innovation forums and other similar engagement initiatives have provided our stakeholders, allowing early engagement and feedback opportunities that feed into the development of our strategy, plans and policies. This report provides a number of case studies under the heading "Pathways to Engagement", describing how initiatives such as the Innovation Forum, External panels, Stakeholder Newsletter and Strategic Webinar series are aimed at providing ways of reaching as broad and wide a range of stakeholders as possible. We are constantly exploring new means and tools for engagement and we will work with our stakeholders to find innovative ways of keeping us all connected through these difficult and uncertain times.

FEEDBACK	LEARNINGS
"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."	ESB Networks understands the importance of having further meaningful mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of our engagement activities. We will continue to apply both quantitative and qualitative engagement metrics to many specific engagement activities through targeted customer and stakeholder sentiment surveys and by gathering ratings, impressions and testimonials of our activities from our online and social media engagement platforms. For example, we measure the effectiveness of our engagement workshops and forums in providing a better understanding of the subjects being delivered. We continually measure customer and stakeholder sentiment relating to the National Smart Metering Programme. We measure the uptake and satisfaction of the use of our new online connections' portal. We are also planning to conduct a more broadly based customer and stakeholder survey during 2021. We will continue to develop measures of engagement performance to be inclusive of a broad range of stakeholders. Selected metrics for 2020 are included in section 4 and 5 of this report.
"An area of concern 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 ESBN and EirGrid in relation to progression of grid delivery works and the Panel expects this will be improved going forward."	ESB Networks recognises the importance of the process for grid connection both for our stakeholders, our business and to enable delivery of climate action targets. For example, stakeholder communication has been particularly important throughout the Enduring Connection Policy (ECP) process for connecting renewables and continual improvements are being made to the rules and processes through collaboration with our stakeholders and collective action with the TSO (EirGrid) and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU). For more detail on this, please refer to the case studies titled 'Connecting Renewables via the Enduring Connection Policy, LEAN Connections Project and Community - Led Renewable Energy Projects'. We have also worked closely with EirGrid to further align our organisational interfaces to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the grid delivery programme.

FEEDBACK	LEARNINGS
"Scope for improvements to be made to ESBN's website."	A companywide project is underway, and investment has been allocated to improve our website in 2021. In the meantime, during 2020, we implemented several improvements to our website including: a new section specifically for Stakeholder and Public Engagement (within this section we share details of our stakeholder engagement opportunities and activities, as well as information on our public consultations); an updated and revamped innovation section to increase transparency of our innovation activities in line with stakeholder feedback; and a new dedicated section for community-led renewable energy projects. In addition to the website updates, key digital services are now being provided for customers including new connections, online applications, digital quotes for new connections and updates to the PowerCheck App.
"Regarding lessons learned, the Panel would welcome to see in the report how learnings from specific engagement activities feed into the overall strategy."	ESB Networks appreciates the importance of stakeholder feedback in shaping our engagement strategy and plans. Such feedback has informed our evolving approach to engagement in 2020 as outlined in our report '**How Stakeholder Feedback is Shaping our Engagement**' published in 2020. In this report, we outline how we are: making improvements to the grid connection offer process; establishing several bilateral meetings and dedicated working groups in response to our stakeholders' requests for early in-depth engagement; providing new pathways for engagement and points of contact for renewable and community-led renewable energy projects, while identifying new ways to measure the effectives of our engagement activities. We also take on board feedback through our public consultation process. We will continue to share these learnings through our published feedback responses which describe how this feedback is shaping policy and future strategy. For further detail, please refer to the tables in Section 5.

FEEDBACK	LEARNINGS
"The System Operators are key stakeholders to each other and interactions between them should be called out more clearly in future reports."	ESB Networks and EirGrid work very closely and actively together at an operational level on a day-to-day basis. Both organisations meet on a quarterly basis at a senior level. There is a formal structure of committees and subgroups managing a wide range of interfaces on technical and operational matters including Operational Services, Network Delivery, Maintenance Policies & Standards, Procurement Strategy, TSO/DSO Interface, Health & Safety and External Engagement. In recent years, the companies have worked very closely together to facilitate renewable generation and the challenges of the national Climate Action plan.
"It is the Panel's view that ESBN 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."	As the distribution system evolves to support Ireland's transition to a low-carbon economy, ESB Networks will ensure that customers and stakeholders remain at the centre of our business. Listening to and engaging with communities is key to understanding their needs and preferences as to how we develop the network and deliver services. We are proud to be able to collaborate with local communities on innovation projects in the Dingle Peninsula, Limerick City and the Aran Islands, as we explore the impact and capabilities of new low-carbon and supporting technologies. In these projects, we are testing and trialling potential solutions to help us develop the decarbonised, decentralised and digitised electricity system of the future. We are also working with customers and communities to better understand the impact of and interaction with changing technologies and new, developing energy systems. During 2020, we also established a Community Energy Liaison Panel to act as the focal point of our engagement with communities around the country in relation to how ESB Networks can support the connection of community-led renewable energy projects to the electricity distribution network. This community participation in support of Climate Action is critical to achieving our national targets.

03.

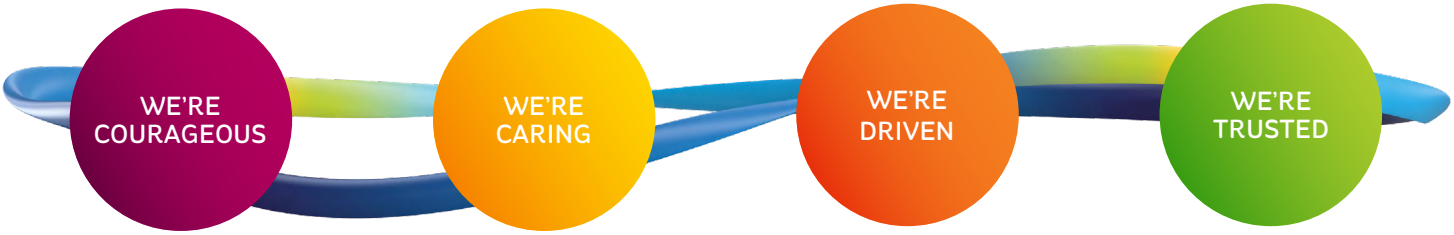
CASE STUDIES

SERVING OUR CUSTOMERS & STAKEHOLDERS

Engagement on 'business-as-usual' activities remains a key part of our overall stakeholder engagement process. These ongoing activities are carried out to ensure electricity gets to the homes, farms and businesses of our 2.3 million electricity customers in Ireland in a safe, reliable and efficient manner.
As meter operator, we also facilitate the competitive electricity market. Through the DSO Licence, ESB Networks is responsible for implementing the key network operator role in both the retail and wholesale market through the installation, maintenance and reading of the meters for over 2.3 million electricity customers and providing this information to electricity suppliers and the Single Electricity Market Operator (SEMO) to facilitate accurate and timely billing. The unique role is managed to a very high standard using multiple Performance Service Level Agreements (SLAs) set by the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities. (CRU). In addition, ESB Networks attends monthly Industry Group Governance (IGG) forums with Suppliers and the CRU where issues are discussed, and market design improvements are progressed. ESB Networks serves all electricity customers and attends to customer needs in the retail market on an ongoing basis to a consistently high level as evidenced by Red C Survey (Year End 2020) score of 89% for Customer Satisfaction with Meter Reading.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a series of nationwide restrictions being introduced by the Government in early 2020 to limit the spread of the virus. In responding to this challenge, we were guided by our ESB Networks values in placing our customers' current and future needs at the heart of what we do whilst ensuring we keep ourselves and others safe and healthy.

OUR VALUES



Each of us is prepared to challenge the way we've always done things, stand up for what we feel is right and try better ways of working.

We're putting customers' current and future needs at the heart of what we do and we keep ourselves and others safe and healthy.

We bring passion and persistence to what we do every day, innovating and collaborating to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

We each play our part, taking ownership of our responsibilities, seeing the job through and protecting our own health and safety, as well as others'.

03.

MANAGING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Purpose/Strategy

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on all our customers and stakeholders. From the outset, ESB Networks adopted a proactive approach, identifying those groups deemed critical to the fight against the virus and those who are most vulnerable, putting in place engagement mechanisms to communicate with and support these customers and organisations.
Using our Crisis Management Team as an overarching structure, we put in place a Critical Stakeholder Team to lead this engagement process. This team was led by the Strategic Engagement Manager and included many members of the already established Stakeholder Steering Group, which coordinates engagement activity across the business.

Implementation

Critical stakeholders were identified, including hospitals, nursing and care homes, testing centres, HSE facilities (including temporary facilities), organisations representing vulnerable groups, water and gas network providers, telecommunication providers, Garda and defence forces, critical broadcasters, local authorities, food shops, distribution centres and multi-site commercial businesses.
The Critical Stakeholder Team engaged directly with the above customer and stakeholder groups by email and phone, recognising that these businesses provide critical infrastructure and services in the fight against COVID-19, and providing single points of contact within ESB Networks. We provided reassurance that we are working to ensure the electricity network remains secure and reliable for these customers and organisations during these uncertain and unprecedented times.
We worked closely with EirGrid as a key stakeholder to coordinate outages and ensure security of supply to critical infrastructure was maintained.

Impact/Benefit

At times of highest government restrictions on working practices, we noted that we continued to engage in safety critical work, planned work needed for short-medium term security of supply, and critical connections work including those in response to the COVID-19 outbreak e.g., for care homes, telecoms providers, temporary hospitals, food shops, distribution centres, water/gas utilities, and customers in vulnerable situations.

The following are a few examples of the numerous new connections, urgent line diversions and other works for COVID-19 related jobs that were successfully achieved through effective customer collaboration and engagement during the period April-May 2020.

A new connection for a private development was fast tracked as the HSE took out a short-term lease on the premises for use in the care of Corona virus patients. ESB Networks expedited a supply increase to a research lab carrying out research into COVID-19 and a supply increase to a new hospital facility which had been originally due to open later in the year but was now being designated for use as part of the COVID-19 response.

ESB Networks also needed to respond and engage quickly and effectively on a number of critical health and safety issues. For example, a serious public safety hazard was found by ESB Networks patrol staff on a line feeding a hospital. ESB Networks staff worked with the hospital to minimise the outage and carry out the repair safely and as quickly as possible.

A bow of a tree fell and broke a pole supporting a 200kVA transformer which was supplying a nursing home. A generator was organised to maintain supply during the outage to replace the transformer pole. All work was completed while adhering fully to ESB Networks COVID-19 controls and with careful coordination on site.

A great team effort from the ESB Networks crew in repairing a dangerous hazard, ensuring minimum outage time to a critical residence. As a result of some careful planning and back feeding, the crew were able to reduce the number of residences impacted to just one multi residential unit and were able to minimise the required power outage to 20 minutes.

ESB Networks staff in Dublin also supported the Tech2Students campaign with Camera Ireland and Trinity Access, to donate disused laptops for Leaving Certificate Students who urgently needed them to continue their studies. Following an appeal to homes and business, more than 600 laptops were delivered to Leaving Certificate students by our ESB volunteers. A big thanks to our volunteers who have made such a difference to this important initiative.

COVID-19 SUPPLIER SUSPENSION PROCESS

Purpose/Strategy

In line with Government COVID-19 restrictions introduced in March 2020, ESB Networks was required to focus on work which was essential for safety, security of supply and COVID-19 support. We provided assurance to critical stakeholders of our continued focus on providing a secure and reliable service. Restrictions included the suspension of all indoor and outdoor meter reading until further notice. With most non-essential business closed, electricity consumption would have to be estimated. Meter reading estimation is normally based on historical consumption and therefore would not consider the sudden closure of businesses in these circumstances. Many businesses were forced to stop trading and the traditional method of applying averages billing would have put many businesses under extra pressure.

In order to mitigate the risk of bill shock and the potential increase in bad debt in the market, a new scheme was needed. The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) approached ESB Networks to consider possible solutions which would temporarily provide relief to SMEs and help electricity suppliers' cash flow for market settlement.

Implementation

ESB Networks, in collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders, considered multiple options and a solution known as the 'COVID-19 Supply Suspension Process' (CSSP) was proposed. The CSSP would provide relief to SMEs and electricity suppliers on the fixed and variable elements of their electricity bill.

03.

ESB Networks proceeded to prepare a market information pack to explain the proposal and to facilitate further engagement with all market participants such as the electricity Suppliers, Single Electricity Market Operator (SEMO) and the CRU. This was then presented and discussed at the Extraordinary Industry Governance Group (IGG) forum, where the proposal received support.

Any change to the operation of the electricity market requires the completion of a Market Change Request (MCR), a process requiring market consultation and final approval by the CRU. Following an intensive engagement period the necessary MCR was approved on 24th April 2020 allowing the COVID-19 Supplier Suspension Process (CSSP) to become available. The first customers signed up on 1st May 2020

Impact/Benefit

The COVID-19 Supplier Suspension scheme was introduced to support Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) to manage the costs associated with their energy connection when temporarily closed as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

In this instance, given the urgency and unprecedented circumstances owing to the pandemic, the necessary market change was one of the quickest changes implemented in the history of the retail market. This could not have been achieved without the extensive engagement, collaboration and support of all the market participants thus enabling a pragmatic change request to be designed, agreed and implemented under severe time pressure.

The supplier suspension scheme enabled:

- businesses to react to severe restrictions introduced by the government
- protected the cashflow of many businesses
- disconnections were prevented and costs of disconnecting and connecting avoided.

The CSSP scheme ran from the 01.05.2020 to 31.07.2020 during which approximately 9K SME customers availed of the scheme.

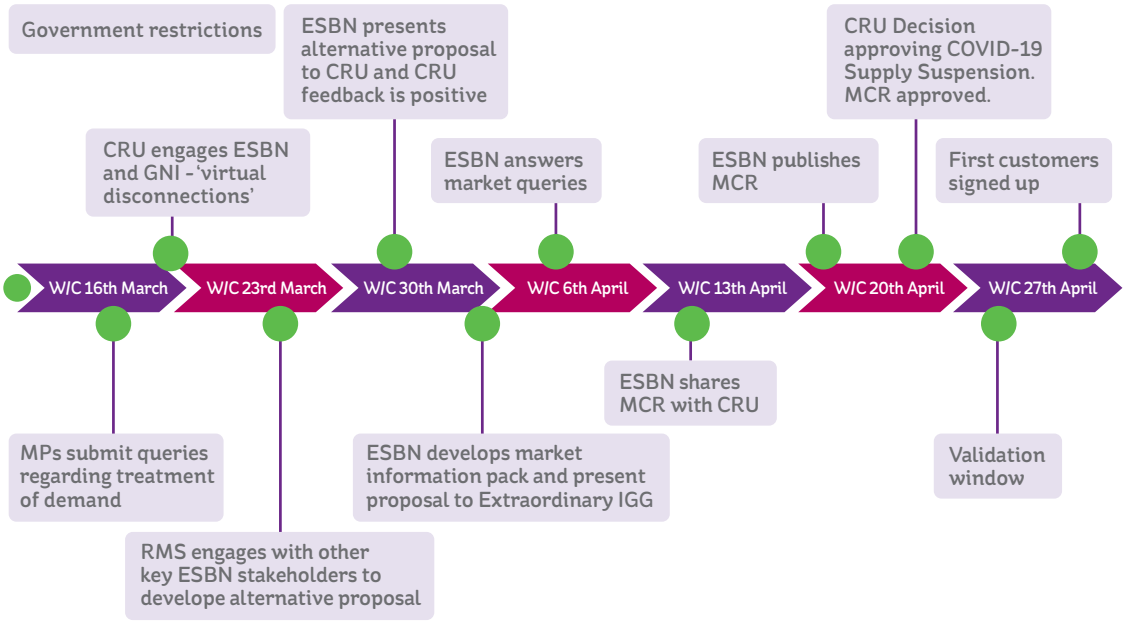


Fig 1: CSSP Design and Stakeholder Engagement Process


ESB NETWORKS
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APPRENTICE
ESB NETWORKS

03.

"WE KEEP THE NATION HUMMING"

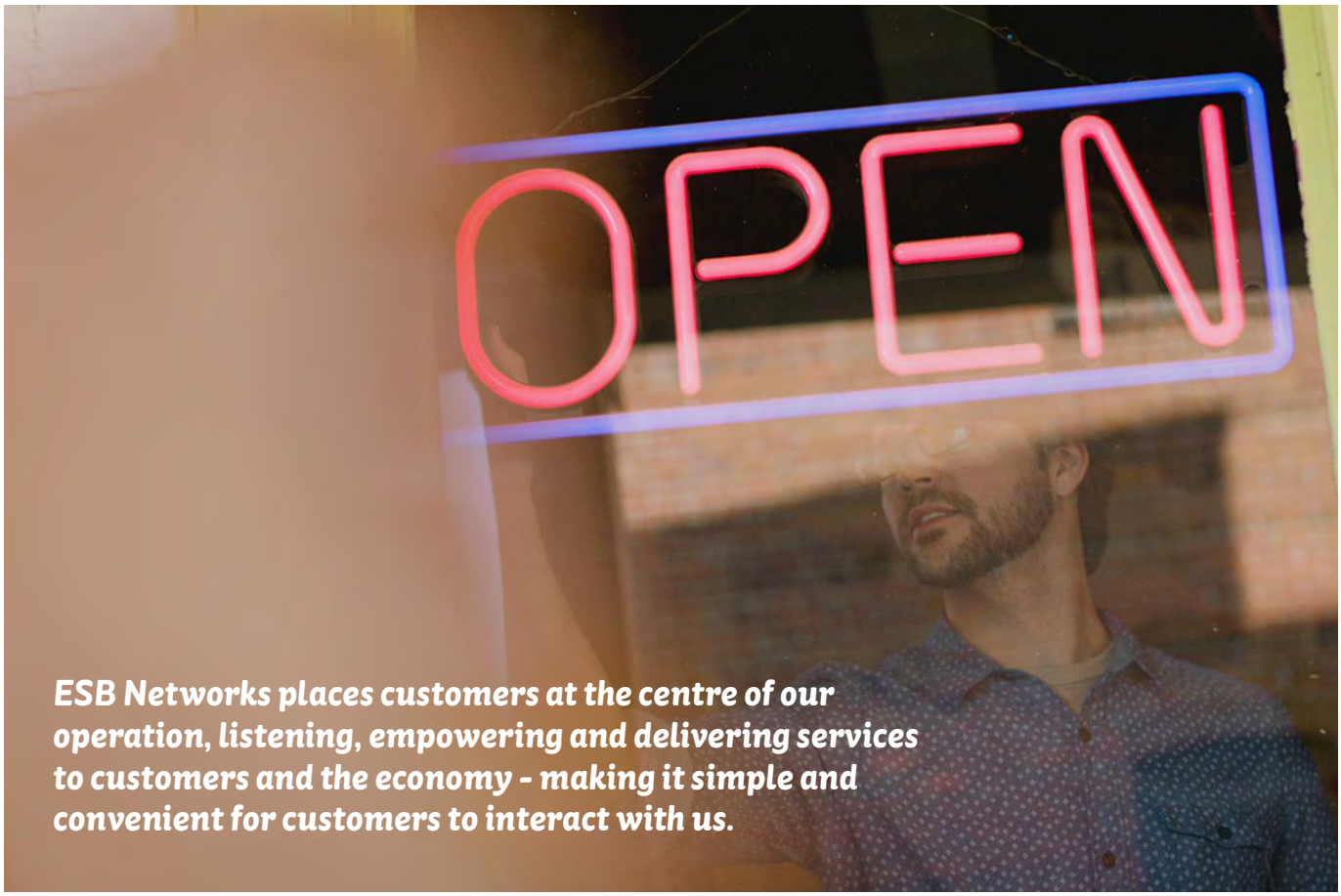
Purpose/Strategy

At ESB Networks, we maintain and build Ireland's power network, connecting us all to a supply of electricity that we can rely on, from our homes and businesses, to our shops and hospitals. Planned outages are sometimes needed to continue to provide a safe, secure and reliable network. These outages happen all of the time but as the vast majority of people are working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, these outages are now more sensitive than ever before, with a greater reliance on electricity in areas such as broadband, light heat and home schooling. Recognising these challenges faced by our customers, it is important to improve the understanding of the necessity of such outages to allow key work programmes to be completed.

Implementation

ESB Networks launched our new campaign, "We Keep the Nation Humming" in June 2020 and ran it again in September 2020. The purpose of the campaign was to improve understanding of the role of ESB Networks and to gain acceptance from our customers for planned outages that will happen as a result of some key work programmes we need to complete. The campaign includes a 30 second TV commercial, four 30 second Radio ads, a full suite of Digital Display, Search and Social Media ads along with Digital Audio ads and a media partnership.

Along with raising awareness of the role of ESB Networks, the ads were aimed at explaining why we incur planned outages, build Smart Metering awareness and build Safety Messaging awareness. The external campaign is supported by stakeholder communications and a public affairs campaign.



ESB Networks places customers at the centre of our operation, listening, empowering and delivering services to customers and the economy - making it simple and convenient for customers to interact with us.

Impact/Benefit

The benefit of this engagement was to improve our customers' understanding of the importance of electricity and how the staff and crews in ESB Networks build and maintain the nations' electricity network that connects and enables everything from hospitals and shops to homes and businesses. The work that our crews and all the teams in ESB Networks does is essential for the nation to progress now and for generations in the future.

A Red C survey has shown that following this campaign there has been a growth in understanding of outages for the essential work on the network from 77% to 83% and overall appreciation that ESB Networks are working to ensure the resilience of the network of the future has grown from 68% to 83%.

MANAGING THE DISTRIBUTION OUTAGE PROGRAMME (DOP)

Purpose/Strategy

Taking power outages on the electricity distribution system is necessary to allow important work to be carried out by ESB Networks to grow, maintain, and secure the electricity distribution system. Such outages are equally important to our customers (both generation and demand) to enable them to connect new plant and/or carry out their own maintenance plans.

The process of coordinating these outages between ESB Networks and our customers has been regarded as a challenge for many years. It is in everyone's interest to minimise the length and frequency of outages by optimising the ESB Networks outage plan with that of its customers. Greater communication and transparency between the system operators and their customers in relation to outage planning was identified as a priority task based on feedback from both our customers and stakeholders.

Implementation

In 2019, a formal Distribution Outage Programme process was initiated. It was developed and coordinated by the two system operators EirGrid as the Transmission System Operator (TSO) and ESB Networks as the Distribution System Operator (DSO).

It involved a process of:

- Identifying all planned capital works on the Transmission and Distribution system such as asset replacement, maintenance works, renewable works and any major customer internal works.
- Detailed assessment of the proposed works with a view to establishing outage requirements, outage durations, start dates, enabling works and proximity outages.
- Performing system planning studies with a view to identifying suitable windows for work.
- Operation of a regular meeting schedule between all parties (system operators, customers and their representatives) with a view to reviewing the impact of planned distribution outages on all stakeholders. These engagement sessions are followed up with an outage schedule look ahead that can be then agreed and planned against.

03.

Impact/Benefit

The DOP process overall has yielded significant benefits to both customers and ESB Networks:

- Improved engagement with major demand and generation Distribution Connected Customers through:
  - Streamlining of the customer communications process
  - Greater knowledge of customer requirements (such as their maintenance schedules / annual shutdowns / portfolio management)
  - Early indication to customers of upcoming Distribution System Operator DSO outages
  - Coordination of DSO outages to minimise impact on customers
  - Coordination of customer outages with DSO outages to minimise number of outages with over 43 pieces of HV alignment occurring in DOP 2020
- Sequencing of distribution work identified at an early stage – particularly the impact of major projects across regional boundaries – which may not be apparent initially.
- Potential savings – As a result of coordinating ESB Networks outages with customer outages (or vice-versa), the number of outages on the system reduces. This allows the electricity system to be operated in its most secure mode for longer, thus reducing potential loss of supply events to customers. In addition, customers managing a portfolio of sites can sequence contractors more effectively.

In March 2020, all planned outage work specified in the Distribution Outage Programme had to cease in line with Government restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of April/early May 2020, the DOP resumed but resulted in a more packed outage calendar than usual, with more customer alignment necessary. Electrical maintenance contractors and portfolio managers began submitting voluntary outage requests for wind farms, factories and data centres.

ESB Networks undertook outage studies to align the DSO works with customer works in order to minimise loss of supply to customers and reduce ESB Networks resource requirements. Intensive engagement and coordination was undertaken with all stakeholders including network operators, network technicians, supervisors, outage planners, Control centre operators, EirGrid and our HV customers.

Although the effect of the delay and change of work practices caused by COVID-19 are still impacting both ESB Networks and our customers' work programmes, we have received very positive feedback from our stakeholders about the increased level of communication and cooperation provided through ESB Networks staff during 2020.

While significant progress has been made in Distribution Outage Programming we will continue to develop this process and engage transparently with our customers to minimise the impact of network outages.

The Distribution Outage Programme (DOP) is a mechanism to capture and align ESB Networks outages with High Voltage (HV) outages.

03.

CASE STUDIES

CLIMATE ACTION FOR OUR CITIZENS & COMMUNITIES

The energy industry is experiencing significant transformation, driven by climate change and decarbonisation considerations set down in various European and national policies, directives and legislation. In 2019, the Irish government laid out in the Climate Action Plan, Ireland's strategy to meet its 2030 climate and energy targets.

Building on the sustained commitment made to decarbonising electricity generation in Ireland over the past two decades, the Climate Action Plan, sets a target of 70% renewable electricity, and the decarbonisation of the heat and transport sectors through the electrification of heat and transport by 2030. A key part of the Clean Energy Package and the Climate Action Plan is the empowerment of customers, both residential and business, to become active players in the energy transition.

Our 2030 strategy builds on ESB Networks' legacy of performance for customers, for the economy and for society. It recognises that Climate Action is one of the most important challenges of our generation. It identifies the critically important and central role of ESB Networks to enable the transition to low carbon. It anticipates some of the major changes that will impact the network over the next ten years and beyond.

As we develop our network to meet the changing needs of customers, we are actively engaging with our customers, stakeholders and communities to ensure that their needs and preferences inform our decision making and plans.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON OUR MICROGENERATION FRAMEWORK

Strategy/Purpose

Microgeneration is a key enabler in allowing individuals, families and communities to become active participants in the energy transition. It is a form of renewable energy or low carbon generation that is likely to be more accessible to many energy customers across the country. The Climate Action Plan has dedicated a section to microgeneration[1] where "The Government strongly supports enabling people to sell excess electricity they have produced back to the grid". ESB Networks are committed to enabling the move towards low carbon technologies and facilitating government policy requirements to develop microgeneration resources and enable participation in the energy market. We are proactively engaging and collaborating with citizens and with key industry stakeholders to develop solutions to facilitate the connection of increasing amounts of this generation on our system. We will support our customers along each stage of the process as they adopt small-scale, low carbon technologies and make the transition towards being active participants in the energy system.

As part of engaging with and assisting citizens on their decarbonisation journey, during 2020, ESB Networks developed and consulted on our Microgeneration Framework. The purpose of this Framework is to provide our customers with the relevant information to assist them in understanding what is involved in the transition from consumer to prosumer and to further kick-start a discussion on the topic of microgeneration. We are committed to facilitating the move towards low carbon technologies and want to support our customers, not only through the process of installing microgeneration but also to enable them to participate in the energy market.

Implementation

This Microgeneration Framework document was published for public consultation in May 2020. The consultation provided a comprehensive and clear overview of ESB Network's role in facilitating microgeneration on the distribution network. The consultation document also provided a lot of relevant information to assist consumers in understanding what's involved in the transition from consumer to prosumer and aimed to kick-start a discussion on the topic of microgeneration, whilst seeking input from the public and a wide range of stakeholders. The framework seeks to identify and examine the building blocks in the microgeneration process in further detail. The grid connection process, legislative basis and existing microgeneration support schemes are outlined to try and provide a comprehensive, single source of relevant information for the reader. This consultation was particularly important for our business, as we deliver on our key value of putting our customers at the centre of everything we do, as well as supporting the delivery of the Climate Action Plan objectives.

While the public consultation period is now closed, the document is still available to view at www.esbnetworks.ie/who-we-are/stakeholder-and-public-engagement/public-consultations

In Q4 2020, ESB Networks published a consultation response document[2] which summarised the responses received to the microgeneration consultation along with ESB Networks feedback, updates (where appropriate) and planned next steps – all consistent with the objective of providing clear and helpful information for respondents, customers, policy makers and industry participants.

Footnote 1: CAP p58 : **https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5350ae-climate-action-plan/** "The Government strongly supports enabling people to sell excess electricity they have produced back to the grid. To enable this, we will have to make a number of changes. We have established a pilot micro-generation grant scheme for solar Photovoltaics (PV), targeting self-consumption, which provides a grant of circa 30% of the installation costs for individual homes. Building on the pilot, we will put an ongoing support scheme in place for microgeneration by 2021 at the latest, focusing on a number of key pillars, including: equity and accessibility for all, ongoing technology cost and remuneration analysis, addressing technical barriers and planning constraints, a clear grid connection policy, and supporting community participation in micro-generation. This will be further supported by measures in building regulations.

Footnote 2: https://www.esbnetworks.ie/docs/default-source/publications/0156-mg-summary---dec-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=757201f0_0

03.

Impact/Benefit

The consultation contained several questions where we sought specific feedback. This feedback has been studied and will be used when undertaking further refinement of possible solutions to enable the transition from energy consumer to energy prosumer. ESB Networks actively wants to support customers in their decarbonisation journey and seeks to inform and support customers who wish to install microgeneration by providing relevant information in relation to the required grid connection process for microgenerators. We are also now working on the development of a simplified grid connection application process for mini-generation connections (greater than microgeneration of 6kW single phase, 11kW three phase, and up to 50kW). We are also working with other key stakeholders in the development of a settlement solution for a microgeneration support scheme.

The consultation was positively received by customers and several responses from a wide array of industry groups were received. To further aid our customers' understanding of microgeneration, in 2020, ESB Networks also published a document outlining the technical impacts of microgeneration on the distribution network, detailing the notification process, current capacity for both urban and rural households, and acknowledging future network developments and possible implications of increasing volumes of renewable energy on the distribution network. The distribution network was not historically designed for generation at low voltages but ESB Networks is cognizant of the expected future increased level of microgeneration and are currently making provision for this in the new planning and security of supply standards for the distribution network.

ESB Networks has an important role to play in facilitating Ireland's decarbonisation goals and views microgeneration as a form of renewable energy or low carbon generation that is likely to be more accessible to many energy customers across the country. ESB Networks aims to support our customers along each stage of the process as they adopt small-scale low-carbon technologies and make the transition towards being active participants in the energy system, and we hope that these documents provide a useful tool to our customers in furthering their understanding of microgeneration.
https://www.esbnetworks.ie/docs/default-source/publications/assessment-of-the-scope-for-higher-penetrations-of-distributed-generation-on-the-low-volage-distribution-network.pdf?sfvrsn=d2d501f0_0

The National Smart Metering Programme (NSMP) will upgrade 2.4 million electricity meters in homes, farms and businesses across Ireland by the end of 2024, delivering benefits to customers, the economy and the environment. The programme forms a key part of the National Climate Action Plan and supports the transition to a low-carbon electricity network.

By the end of December 2020, a total of just over 239,400 meters have been successfully installed.

SMART METERING PROGRAMME

Strategy/Purpose

The roll-out of the National Smart Metering Programme (NSMP) is being delivered over a number of phases by ESB Networks in cooperation with the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) and with all electricity supply companies. Deployment of smart meters began in Cork, Laois and Kildare in Autumn 2019 and extended to areas of Dublin, Wicklow, Meath and Louth at the start of 2020.

The roll-out is being delivered by ESB Networks technicians and three Deployment Contractors. It is supported by an ESB Networks led customer awareness and stakeholder engagement plan which aims to ensure that our customers and stakeholders are fully aware of the meter replacement programme and that they have a high level of trust in the installation process, the safety protocols and those installing the meters.

In order to comply with COVID-19 guidelines, the meter replacement programme was suspended temporarily for seven weeks at the end of March 2020. Outdoor meter replacements resumed in May and indoor replacements resumed in September.

Implementation

Understanding the impact on customers of COVID-19, a new customer journey with additional measures was implemented to ensure the health and safety of our customers, staff and contractors during the meter replacement process. These new safety protocols, along with agreed call centre scripts, were developed with all deployment stakeholders to ensure a uniform customer journey was delivered. Customers whose meters were scheduled to be replaced were informed of these new measures through an information COVID-19 leaflet which was sent with a letter advising them on how to make an appointment for their meter replacement.

The customer awareness and stakeholder engagement plan adjusted accordingly with face-to-face campaigns suspended. All other engagement activities proceeded as planned, including the NSMP's industry Working Groups meetings; written briefings were provided to all elected representatives in the rollout areas, as well as quarterly customer sentiment surveys conducted by Red-C.

Customer sentiment on the doorsteps and in call centres was, and continues to be, monitored on a daily basis. Less than 1% of all appointments were deferred with the main reasons being Covid cocooning or working from home.

03.

Consistent engagement continued with the industry stakeholders to maintain programme focus through the varying levels of restrictions and to ensure industry alignment on communications to support the smooth remobilisation of the meter replacement activities.

Easily accessible online information was enhanced, including promoted Adwords and expanded Frequently Asked Questions. New videos were uploaded onto the website giving an overview of the programme, its importance for the Climate Action Plan and information on how to read a smart meter. The NSMP communications campaign was rolled out on local radio, press and online channels to raise awareness of the programme in February, July, September, October and November 2020.

Impact/Benefit

Through the introduction of revised safety protocols and effective stakeholder management, the meter replacement programme resumed promptly in May 2020, following the easing of Government restrictions. By the end of December, a total of 239,440 smart meters have been safely installed across Ireland. Stakeholder feedback remained positive and supportive of the NSMP.

Daily tracking of customer sentiment through the call centres, media and social media, shows customer sentiment also remained positive and facilitated meter exchanges. This was reflected in the findings from quarterly customer sentiment surveys by Red C.

ESB Networks, Electricity Suppliers, CRU & DECC are coordinating engagement with the general public through an agreed Smart Metering Customer Awareness strategy. Research conducted by Red C, has shown that awareness of smart meters in the general population increased from 65% in September 2019 to 75% in September 2020. A rise of 10% due to the coordinated industry engagement activity in 2020.

In 2021, our approach will be to remain flexible so that we can best respond to Government COVID-19 guidelines and continue to keep customers as a central focus of the rollout programme. The programme monitors customer sentiment daily through feedback from installers and contact centres, we also undertake quarterly customer surveys by Red C.

Based on feedback from customers, we regularly update our website. Developments in 2020 included the creation of a benefits infographic and a COVID-19 precautions letter insert. We have also updated the video on how to read your smart meter, following supplier feedback. In 2021, the programme will also survey customers who had a meter replacement to understand customer satisfaction with the meter installation customer journey.

Our aim is to continue locally based communications to support the installation of 500,000 smart meters and the introduction of smart services by suppliers in 2021. The focus of the stakeholder engagement will be to maintain consistent engagement with industry stakeholders while promoting awareness of smart meters to customers in new rollout areas across the country.
The National Smart Metering Programme (NSMP) customer awareness and engagement strategy has been agreed by the Programme's Steering Group and is reviewed regularly by the industry communications and engagement working group which is chaired by ESB Networks and attended by industry stakeholders including DCCE, CRU, SEAI and representatives of the electricity supply companies. The working group ensures industry alignment on communications to support the roll out and acceptance of the NSMP.

LEAN CONNECTIONS PROJECT ENGAGEMENT

Strategy/Purpose

The continued connection of renewable energy generators and large demand customers to the electricity network continues to be a key organisational priority for ESB Networks, and a strategic enabler of Ireland's Climate Action response. Given the increasing volumes of generation connections forecast for Enduring Connection Policy (ECP) and Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auctions out to 2030, and for targets set in the National Climate Action Plan, the speed of the grid connection process is of vital importance.

ESB Networks recognises the importance of continuous improvement in our major infrastructure delivery process, to successfully deliver on our challenging programme of work over the coming years. The 'Lean Connections Project' was established in 2019 to meet this challenge and to reflect the needs and concerns of our stakeholders.

The aim of this project is to apply lean principles to the delivery of the following major projects:

- Renewables Connections – to support delivery of the Climate Action Plan
- Major Load Connections – to support economic growth and development
- Price Review 5 (PR5) Work Programme, including major Asset Replacement and major Reinforcement Projects – to ensure safety, quality and continuity of supply to all our customers.

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Implementation

The project, working collaboratively with the technical experts involved in all stages in the delivery of Renewable Connections, will review and analyse how we currently deliver our Renewable Connections, identify areas where we can improve our performance for our customers, and embed lean ways of delivering this work.

In 2020, we consulted with major customers and key stakeholders, internally and externally, to get their initial views on what we can do to improve the delivery of our major infrastructure projects, and on the changes we are proposing and implementing. We have engaged a Consultant to work with ESB Networks throughout 2021 on the review and redesign of our processes for delivering major capital projects. The process to deliver renewable projects form part of this review and redesign. The review stage of the project will be completed through Q1 and Q2 2021 and the redesign phase of the project will begin late Q2 2021. While the Lean Connections project will end in Quarter 1 2022, the adoption of a Lean approach, and implementation of continuous improvements to the delivery of major projects, will continue beyond that time.

The Lean Connections Project has engaged external consultants to support us with this project which will involve an intensive Stakeholder consultation process to commence in 2021. Stakeholder feedback will form an integral step in the development of the review and redesign of our end-to-end process for the delivery of major infrastructure projects by adopting lean ways of working.

Impact/Benefit

The Lean Connections Team will encourage Stakeholders to approach the team throughout the project if they wish to highlight any issues or put forward any topics for exploration.

The tangible success of the Lean Connections Project will be observed through quicker stakeholder connection times, improved industry feedback, improved scope accuracy and improved project cost certainty.

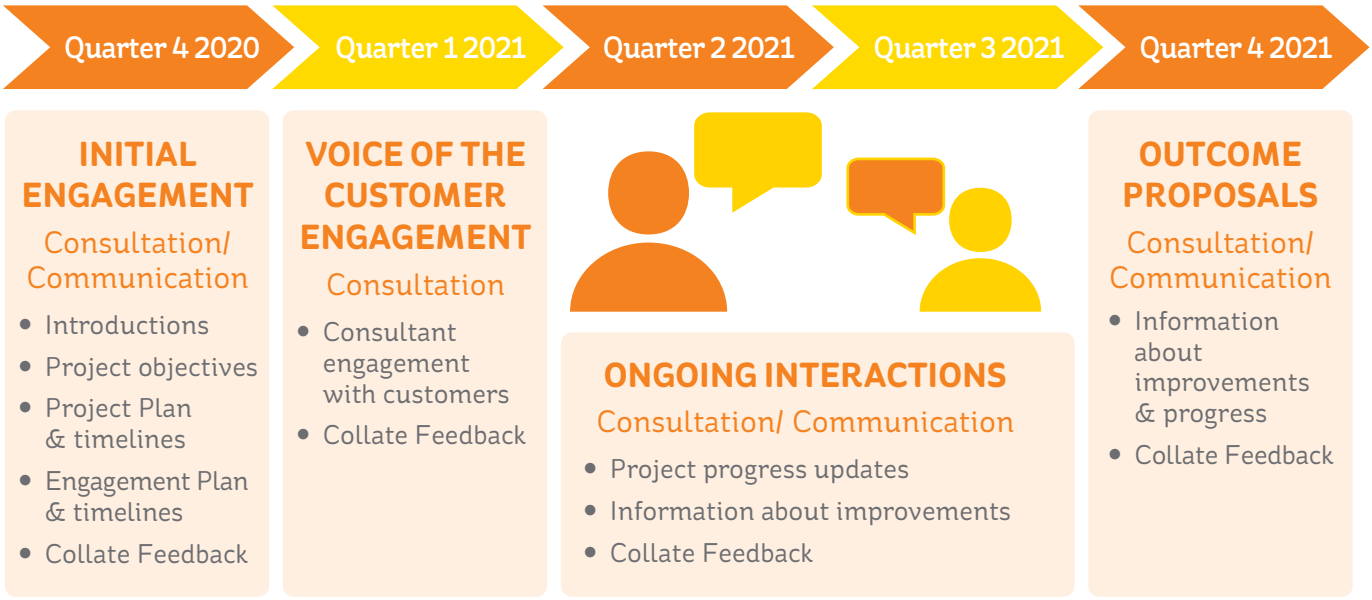


Fig 1: Stakeholder Engagement Process for Lean Connections Project

CONNECTING RENEWABLES - ENDURING CONNECTION POLICY

Strategy/Purpose

Stakeholder communication has been particularly important throughout the Enduring Connection Policy (ECP) process in ensuring eligible applicants across a broad range of renewable technologies (Wind, Solar, Hydro, Batteries, Biomass, CHP, Hybrid) received a grid connection offer in a timely manner.

The Enduring Connection Policy (ECP) process for grid connection applications is the pathway for generators, storage and other system services technology projects to connect to the electricity system. The Decision Paper for the first stage of the Enduring Connection Policy (ECP) and accompanying ECP Ruleset were published by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) on the 27th March 2018, with the principal objective to allow projects which were 'shovel ready' (i.e., with Planning Permission) the opportunity to connect to the network while also providing more regular opportunities for the processing of connection offers (i.e., more frequent batches) in the future.

On 10th June 2020, the CRU published the Decision Paper for the second stage of the Enduring Connection Policy Process (ECP-2). ECP-2 builds on the objectives of ECP-1, with increased prioritisation of large renewable energy projects and community-led renewable energy projects, helping to facilitate a low-carbon future.

Implementation

ESB Networks met the challenging ECP-1 timelines of issuing 95 connection offers totalling 800MWs over an 18-month period between December 2018 and May 2020. This achievement was possible through collaboration with our stakeholders including collective action with EirGrid and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU). Specific improvements in the ECP-1 process included providing project developers with more certainty in their connection offers by, for instance, including an estimation of the civil works pass-through costs.

ESB Networks supported the CRU in their development of ECP-2 policy and in collaboration with EirGrid, developed the subsequent ECP-2 ruleset (in line with regulated policy) which was approved by the CRU. In response to stakeholder feedback through the development of the ECP-2 policy,

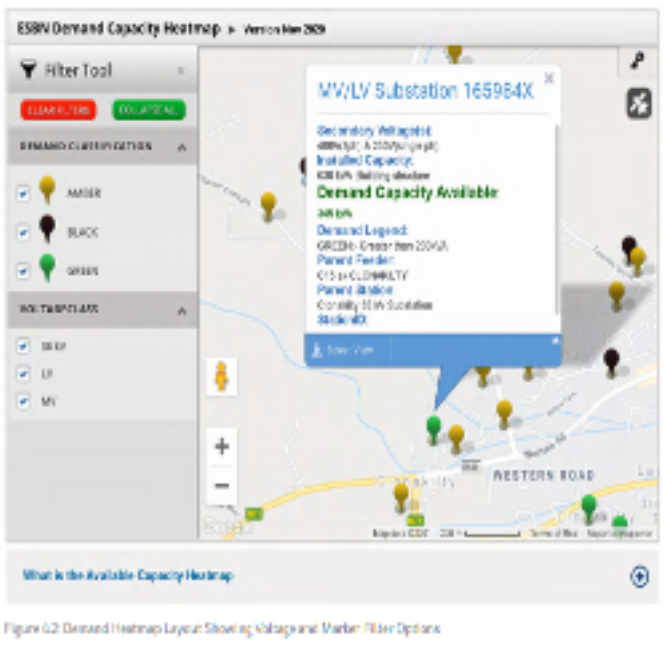
ESB Networks has implemented the following improvements to stakeholder engagement:

- initial early engagement meetings are offered to applicants
- further connection method meetings are offered to all applicants to ensure that projects have a higher likelihood of moving forward successfully
- projects will also have an opportunity to submit a preferred connection method
- applicants now also have an option to re-optimise their MW capacity application or withdraw from the process for a partial refund of application fees
- ECP-2 Projects will have a point of contact within ESB Networks who will manage queries from the applicants throughout the connection offer process
- ESB Networks are now also providing more detailed network information through capacity heatmaps. The heatmaps provide customers with a high-level overview of available transformer capacity at HV & MV distribution stations throughout the country
- stakeholder webinars were hosted in July 2020 specifically on how to utilise the capacity heat maps and to provide early information and indication of the ruleset proposed for the ECP-2 process.

03.

Heatmap project

ESB Networks is committed to more openly and transparently sharing data that may be useful to customers and stakeholders. Such data may provide insight into decisions relating to the network and better inform customers before submitting connection applications. This project reflects that ambition by providing an indication of available capacity for new demand and generation customers. The project succeeded in its aim of providing an interactive map showing the available network capacity in terms of how much demand or generation could be added into a substation without significant reinforcement. The demand and generation heatmaps were published in May. 2020 on ESB Networks' website.



Impact/Benefit

The improvements to the stakeholder engagement process have been welcomed. The early engagement with applicants through a range of dedicated customer meetings in ECP-2.1 resulted in a number of projects which would have required significant and costly uprate works withdrawing from the process. This early customer engagement enabled ESB Networks to backfill the ECP-2.1 batch with 14 additional projects which was positively received by industry. ESBN will process circa 90 connection offers under the ECP-2.1 process in 2021.

The feedback received from the ECP and heat map webinars (with almost 70 participants in attendance) was positive and encouraging. Stakeholder comments regarding the Heat Maps included "very easy to use" and "useful tool". The publication of the station transformer capacity information was widely welcomed, and further improvements to the functionality and presentation of the heat maps are underway in response to feedback received. For instance, the next phase of this project will include the facility to download the information published on the webpage into an excel file and the general layout of the webpage will be enhanced. This represents a good example of where requests for better transparency and readily available information were addressed by ESB Networks with positive benefits for all parties.

COMMUNITY-LED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

Strategy/Purpose

Communities can play a vital role in the journey towards a low carbon future and can now participate in community-led renewable energy projects supported by Irish policy initiatives, including the government's Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) and the regulator's Enduring Connection Policy (ECP).

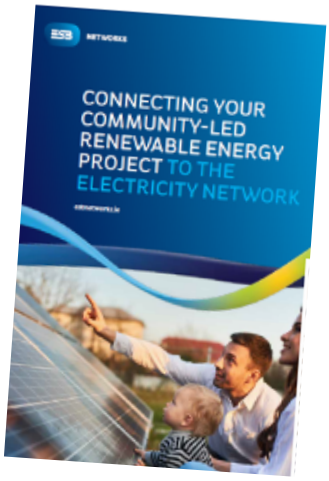
ESB Networks is fully committed to supporting and empowering communities in this journey and in proactively providing information, such as advice and guidance in relation to connecting community-led renewable energy projects to the electricity distribution network.

Implementation

ESB Networks appreciates that the process for establishing a community-led renewable project is very complex. It is guided by several regulatory policy documents and application process rulesets. As a first step, we therefore developed a dedicated webpage on the ESB Networks website for community-led renewable energy project applicants, as a repository and link to the necessary information.

We also established a Community-Led Renewable Energy Liaison Panel to act as the focal point of our engagement with communities around the country in relation to how ESB Networks can support the connection of community-led renewable energy projects to the electricity distribution network. This panel consists of staff from three key areas across the business (Regulation & Commercial, Stakeholder Engagement and Project Delivery).

The Panel are the access point for communities, including a dedicated email communityenergy@esbnetworks.ie for community-led renewable energy projects to ask questions in relation to grid connections.

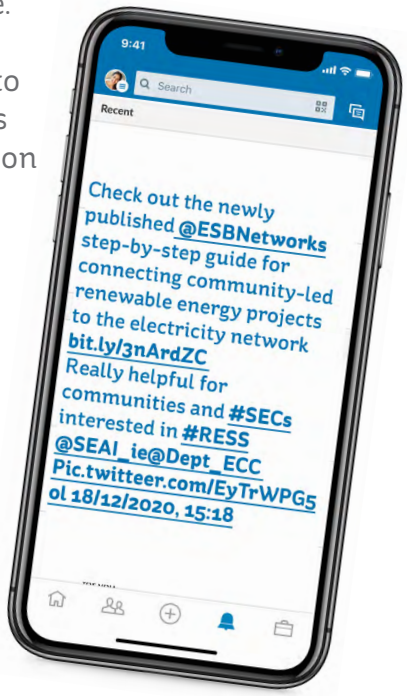


One of the first tasks of this panel was to produce a community-led renewable energy projects guide to help support and explain the steps involved in connecting a community-led renewable energy project to the electricity distribution network. This 20-page brochure was published in late December 2020 and is aimed at customers with varying levels of knowledge of the connection process, from newcomers to consultants.

Impact/Benefit

Increasing customer knowledge of the CRU policy and ruleset applicable and network connection process will allow more community involvement and participation in community-led renewable energy projects. We have received very positive feedback in relation to the positive developments we have completed this year for communities i.e., creation of dedicated page on our website, creation of liaison panel, new dedicated email address to be contacted on, and in particular publication of the guide. ESB Networks look forward to continuing to work with communities to support the connection of their renewable energy projects to the distribution network.

Positive social media sentiment for the community-led energy brochure:



03.

ELECTRIFICATION OF HEAT AND TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Strategy/Purpose

The National Climate Action Plan released in 2019 has set challenging targets for uptake of electric vehicles (EVs) and residential electric heating sources out to 2030, with interim targets defined for 2025. The Government plan has targets for 936,000 electric vehicles (EVs) and 600,000 residential premises to be equipped with electric heating sources including heat pumps by 2030.

Achieving these targets will contribute significantly to delivering Ireland's decarbonisation objectives. This transformation will require the distribution system to transfer significantly more energy to supply electrified heat and transport. Key to addressing this challenge therefore is the distribution network itself but it will also require addressing of policy requirements and supporting our customers to transition to these technologies by supporting the installation of EV charging infrastructure and electrified heat infrastructure.

ESB Networks Electrification of Heat and Transport Strategy addresses the challenges outlined above, cognisant of the growing interdependence between the electricity, heat and transport sectors, ensuring that ESB Networks delivers a distribution system that will enable the electrification of heat and transport. This transition to electrified heat and transport will require changes across electricity, heat and transport requiring intense collaboration across these sectors. This means that engagement and feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders is needed to ensure that our strategy is aligned with external stakeholder requirements and delivers a distribution system that will cost-effectively power the heat and transport sectors of the future reliably and sustainably.

Implementation

As part of the development of the Electrification of Heat and Transport Strategy, we engaged extensively with external stakeholders to inform the development of the strategy itself. We held several bilateral meetings with key stakeholders, including Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and the Local Government Management Agency. The draft Electrification of Heat and Transport Strategy was presented as part of a presentation on the Electrification of Transport as part of our Autumn Innovation Webinar Series. In Q4 2020, ESB Networks went out to consultation on our draft Electrification of Heat and Transport Strategy which set out our vision and approach to facilitating the electrification of heat and transport. In support of this consultation, we hosted a webinar and Q&A session with stakeholders to discuss the draft Electrification of Heat and Transport Strategy.

Impact/Benefit

Through this public consultation, webinars and bilateral meetings, ESB Networks received feedback on this draft strategy from customers and stakeholders to ensure alignment with their ambitions and expectations. In addition to feedback we received at the stakeholder events, we received 11 formal responses to the consultation from a wide cross-section of the stakeholders in electrified heat and transport including suppliers, generators and local authority representative groups.

This extensive engagement enabled the final electrification strategy to be published in Q1 2021.

03.

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES & ENABLING THE ACTIVE ENERGY CITIZEN

Strategy/Purpose

We are proud to be able to collaborate with local communities on innovation projects as we explore the impact and capabilities of new low-carbon and supporting technologies. In these projects, we are testing and trialling potential solutions to help us develop the decarbonised, decentralised and digitised electricity system of the future. We are also working with customers and communities to better understand the impact of and interaction with changing technologies and new, developing energy systems.

Implementation

The Dingle Electrification Project will see the deployment and implementation of a range of new technologies to evaluate their capability to support the development of a smart, resilient, low-carbon electricity system. An important element of this project is the opportunity it allows ESB Networks to collaborate with local communities, as we explore both the impact and capabilities of new, low-carbon technologies and how customers and communities interact with these new energy systems. There were also several activities progressed throughout 2020 to help understand the effectiveness of behaviours and the mechanisms required to transition individuals and communities to Active Energy Citizens.

In Limerick, a community energy concept will be trialled with the use of intelligent meters, innovative new renewable generators (including hydrokinetic energy), electrical energy storage, digital tools and citizen participation to create a Distributed Positive Energy Block (DPEB) and District. ESB Networks' focus will be to support the integration of the DPEB into the distribution network and provide regulatory and technical advice needed to enable concepts such as peer-to-peer energy trading and the Energy Community Utility (ECU) to be trialled.

In late 2020, ESB Networks launched the Active System Management (ASM) project to fundamentally and innovatively transform how we manage and operate the electricity distribution system. This will involve actively managing demand and generation within an overall market framework, to enable distribution-connected renewables, communities and demand response and storage providers to actively participate in the electricity system. Given its transformational role across our business and the need for its implementation as Business-As-Usual in the medium term, this initiative has been established as a dedicated multi-year project as per the approach taken with the Smart Meters Rollout, and will involve extensive collaboration with stakeholders over the coming years.

Impact/Benefit

During the year, project activities were impacted as a result of COVID-19 restrictions and delays were encountered, mainly in the community engagement elements of some of the projects. However, ESB Networks will continue to support the identification of those techniques and activities that are most successful in diffusing active energy citizen behaviours across society, through the various trials and activities being undertaken through these innovation projects.

For example, the inclusion of a Dingle Ambassador as an interviewee in our Strategic Webinar Series; titled 'Enabling Active Energy Citizen (December 2020)', provided an opportunity to showcase and advocate the real-life adoption and benefit of these technologies.

ENGAGEMENT ON PRICE REVIEW FIVE (PR5)

Strategy/Purpose

Following on from the extensive engagement process carried out in 2019, further collaboration with a broad range of strategic stakeholders and customers was undertaken throughout 2020 to work towards a Price Review Determination that would reflect the needs of both ESB Networks and our stakeholders.

A draft of the determination was published in July 2020 for public consultation by the CRU which offered an opportunity for further engagement with our stakeholders to shape the final outcome and provide a consultation response that was reflective of the needs of all.

Implementation

A series of targeted workshops with stakeholders were conducted throughout Quarter 3, using a Skype for business presentation format with menti.com used to capture stakeholder feedback.

During these workshops, ESB Networks presented the detail of the draft determination and described what it meant for our programme of work for the next five years. We welcomed the input that our stakeholders contributed and discussed the potential impact of the determination for our customers and stakeholders. This two-way communication enabled a collaborative consultation response and the contribution of our stakeholders resulted in material improvements between the draft and final determination.

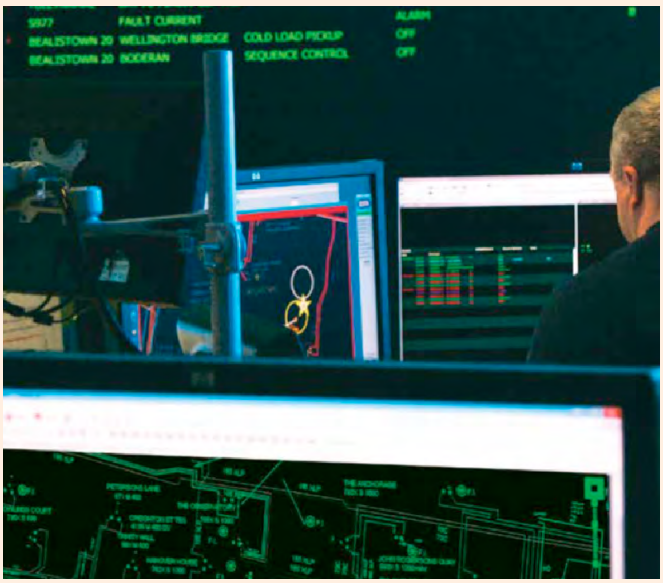
Impact/Benefit

ESB Networks welcomes the PR5 Final Determination as published in December 2020. It represents a balanced and positive outcome to the PR5 process and will support ESB Networks work with its stakeholders across the electricity industry to meet customer expectations, and enable Climate Action, through the efficient and structured delivery of a large programme of work over the coming years. This is an important step on the Climate Action Plan, and important to enabling continued social and economic development in Ireland.

Price Review Five (PR5) Determination puts forward the CRU's decision on the network companies' revenues for the 2021 to 2025 (PR5) period. It comes at an important time for the evolution of the electricity networks and will play an important role in enabling the transition to a low carbon system by 2030 and ensuring security of supply.

The main objectives are

- **Facilitating a secure low carbon future**
- **Resolving local security of supply**
- **Transforming the role of the DSO**
- **Increasing efficiency and protecting customers.**



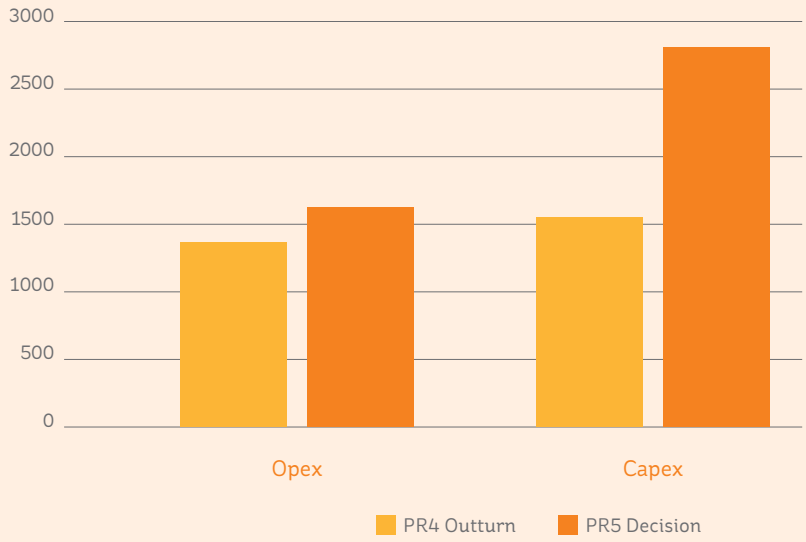
03.

PR5 will see a step change in revenue when compared to PR4 (2016 – 2020) outturn expenditure.

The following key points are noted:

- 20% increase in Operational Expenditure, total of €1.7bn is allowed by the CRU.
- 84% increase in Gross Capital Expenditure (an increase of €1bn). A total of €2.8bn is allowed by the CRU.

Distribution Allowed Revenues



The PR5 determination supports those activities which have the greatest impact on customers, and which are most critical to enable a low carbon future in Ireland, including the electrification of heat and transport, and achieving our 70% renewables target by 2030. This includes:

- Beginning to deliver localised capacity upgrades to enable Irish households and businesses begin to adopt electric heating, vehicles and microgeneration
- Rolling out the National Smart Metering programme nationwide, so that Irish homes and businesses are empowered to take greater control of when and how much electricity they use
- Rolling out transformative new operational control system capabilities to enable customers (renewables, demand, communities, storage) to participate in a low carbon electricity system, locally and in the Single Electricity Market (SEM)
- Delivering more capacity and asset replacement across the transmission and distribution systems, to ensure that the backbone of our system is secure and resilient
- Connecting an ever-accelerating pipeline of renewable generation.

As we commence this new price review period 2021-2025, we would like to thank our customers and stakeholders for their active and open participation in the PR5 process. The actions and the voices of our stakeholders and our customers provided ESB Networks with the clarity and evidence needed to build a transformative and effective PR5 business plan. Those same customer and stakeholder voices provided the CRU with the assurance it needed regarding customer's values and expectations, as it arrived at its final PR5 Determination.

03.

CASE STUDIES

SAFETY & THE ENVIRONMENT

Electricity is an essential product for modern society, but it can also be very dangerous unless proper precautions are taken, especially when carrying out works near to the electricity networks. Safety is central to everything we do in ESB Networks and we are fully committed to protecting the safety, health and wellbeing of our employees, contractors, customers, members of the public and others who may be impacted by our work activities.

ESB Networks recognises that our activities have environmental impacts and that we have a responsibility to manage these impacts in a manner that prevents pollution and provides a high level of protection for the natural environment, while also contributing to the sustainable development of our economy. This involves continuous improvement in our environmental performance across all our operations, reducing our carbon footprint, increasing our energy efficiency and delivering on our commitments under the European DSO Sustainable Grid Charter, while ensuring that our actions and reporting are open, transparent and consistent with our values.

03.

FARM SAFETY COMPETITION - PARTNERING WITH A KEY STAKEHOLDER AND ENGAGING WITH STUDENTS

Strategy/Purpose

The purpose of the Farm Safety Competition is to increase engagement with secondary school students on the topic of farm safety and inviting groups of students to become involved with innovative ideas and initiatives. Engaging with the farm sector in order to increase awareness and knowledge of how to work safely is critical given the dangers involved and the numbers of people injured on farms.

The Safe Family Farms partnership is a joint initiative between ESB Networks and the Irish Farmers Journal that promotes farm safety and safe working practices across all age demographics and is one of the main pillars of the ESB Networks Public Safety Strategy.

Implementation

The 'Show us your safety idea' competition is an adaptation of the previous and more traditional schools' competition, in response to the restrictions imposed due to COVID-19. Students were encouraged and supported to develop their ideas and prototypes of how they could make the farm a safer place for everyone. The Irish Farmers Journal and ESB Networks jointly ran an extensive online and print campaign to create awareness and encourage students to enter the competition.

The competition was heavily promoted online and in print with a targeted campaign to create awareness and increase the number of potential entrants. Instead of the usual school workshops implementation, we created an online portal so that each entrant could submit their ideas and also view other submitted entries.

SAFE FAMILY FARMS FARMING SAFELY

Brought to you by: FARMERS JOURNAL ESB NETWORKS

Following the adjudication of all the entries, four national finalists were selected, with the overall winner profiled in the Irish Farmers Journal, as well as receiving a bursary to further develop their concept.

Impact/Benefit

Despite the challenge of COVID-19 and the closure of schools, the Farm Safety competition performed very well.

Key results were:

	Facebook reach	Twitter reach	Total reach
Video 1 (8th May)	6,860	2,586	9,446
Video 2 (11th May)	16,996	7,548	24,544
Video 3 (14th May)	7,250	7,356	14,606
Video 4 (19th May)	7,608	10,149	17,757
Video 5 (21st May)	6,226	9,377	15,603
Video 6 (25th May)	7,688	10,363	18,051
Video 7 (28th May)	7,746	8,583	16,329
Total	**60,374**	**55,962**	**116,336**

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE PROGRAMME

Background

ESB Networks has been certified to the ISO 14001 Standard since 2010, and is fully committed to managing its assets and conducting its activities in an environmentally responsible manner. It was in this spirit that ESB Networks initiated an Environmental Change Programme (ECP) in June of 2019.

Two of the key objectives of the Programme are to:

- highlight the corporate priority the Environment has within the organisation
- ensure the organisation is transparent in communicating its environmental performance.

As part of this programme, we engaged consultants to conduct an environmental impact review of our operations. One of the recommendations was to be more transparent in the approach to external reporting of environmental performance/impacts. This aligned with advice received during one of our regular ISO 14001 audits. Acting on this feedback, ESB Networks established "The Environmental Transparency Project".

Strategy/Purpose

The primary purpose of "The Environmental Transparency Project" is to review and enhance the publicly available environmental information on the ESB Networks website so that stakeholders are kept informed, with up-to-date information, of our environmental impacts and performance.

Implementation

The Project commenced in Q3 2020 with the appointment of an experienced project team comprising personnel from across the business. The team has a wealth of expertise in areas such as stakeholder engagement, website development, social media engagement, sustainability, climate change, innovation and environmental risk management. The project aims to deliver a positive engagement experience for all stakeholders using the enhanced website. It is intended to launch the new environmental section of the ESB Networks' website in the first half of 2021.

Impact/Benefit

The key benefits of "The Environmental Transparency Project" include:

- a user-friendly website containing up-to-date environmental information that is of interest to our stakeholders
- an increase in the level of assurance ESB Networks provides to its stakeholders that it is actively committed to continually improving its environmental performance
- Increased level of awareness and engagement with our stakeholders.

Once the new environmental section of the website is launched, ESB Networks will promote it across its various media platforms to ensure the greatest number of stakeholders possible is made aware of it. ESB Networks would expect to see a large increase in the number of people using and viewing the website during 2021 compared to 2020. We will encourage and promote feedback from users so that the website remains current, informative and as user-friendly as possible.

03.

CASE STUDIES

PATHWAYS TO ENGAGEMENT

ESB Networks recognises the importance of providing pathways for our stakeholders that allow them initiate engagement with our business. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic means that more than ever we need to maintain strong pathways for stakeholder engagement.

Following the initial announcement of government restrictions in March 2020, we reached out to critical infrastructure stakeholder groups by providing dedicated points of contact in case of emergency. Having dedicated stakeholder leads across the business via our "Stakeholder Engagement Steering Group" has been key to helping ESB Networks liaise with its stakeholders during this uncertain time. More than ever, we are dependent on virtual tools and new ways of connecting with our stakeholders in the absence of face-to-face interactions.

During 2020, we have undertaken many new initiatives to improve our pathways to engagement which are described in the following case studies. We have also initiated improvements to our dedicated Stakeholder and Public Engagement section of our website, where we have added a new consultations/publications section and a forward-looking list of proposed consultations, publications and events.

ESB NETWORKS INNOVATION WEBINAR SERIES

Strategy/Purpose

Putting the customer at the centre of everything we do is key to ESB Networks Innovation Strategy, ensuring we are focused on the right innovation projects to deliver on the transition to a low carbon society. ESB Networks Innovation teams engage with stakeholders via several channels. These include, a public industry consultation on our innovation activities, our Innovation Forums and a range of targeted engagements such as bilateral meetings and workshops with industry stakeholders and electricity suppliers.

For example, in November 2019, ESB Networks hosted its first Innovation Forum, an event which allowed us to share information and discuss our innovation projects and activities with our stakeholders. This, the inaugural event, was the first of our Spring and Autumn Innovation Forum series, with another that was scheduled for April 2020.

Unfortunately, due to the timing and impact of COVID-19, we were unable to proceed as planned with this physical event. However, in the spirit of innovation we looked at how best to continue our engagement opportunities, resulting in the rollout of our Spring & Autumn Innovation Webinar Series.
Implementation

Implementation

In Spring 2020, we held our first Innovation Webinar Series, featuring the webinar topics listed below, which were selected based on previous stakeholder requests and consultation feedback. Representatives from government, industry, academia and representative associations attended and participated throughout the series.

When planning for our Autumn 2020 Innovation webinar series, to best serve our stakeholders and to ensure that we were hosting webinars on topics that were of interest to them, we issued a survey providing 11 topic options, allowing stakeholders to vote on their preferences.

#	Spring Innovation Webinar Series
1	ESB Networks' Network Flexibility Project
2	The Dingle Electrification Project - Peer-to-Peer Trial
3	ESB Networks' Innovation Project Identification and Evaluation

The Autumn Webinar Series then reflected the top five topics chosen by our stakeholders, listed below. We also asked our stakeholders whether they wanted these webinars delivered all in one session, or through one webinar per week. 73% selected one per week, and as a result, the series was scheduled and delivered in this way.

#	Autumn Innovation Webinar Series
1	Compact Standard Modules for Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Connections
2	Electrification of Transport
3	Active System Management Programme - Delivering the Future DSO
4	Interactive Session on ESB Networks' Pipeline of Innovation Projects
5	The SOGNO Project – Smart Monitoring for Increased Resilience

The five successful webinars were hosted over a five-week period and came to a close on October 15th. Throughout, and at each stage of both the Spring and Autumn webinar series, we sought feedback and engagement using an interactive presentation tool which has informed our innovation projects and activities. For example, the interactive presentation tool enabled stakeholders to engage with each other and ESB Networks subject matter experts, to participate in polls and surveys, and to have a virtual questions and answers panel session with the presenters. For each webinar, we would receive questions and comments which enabled us to go deeper into each area of interest with our stakeholders.

Impact/Benefit

The webinar format enabled ESB Networks to broaden and diversify our stakeholder engagement with on average of over 80 attendees per webinar. Through the online engagement, we issued surveys to garner stakeholder feedback and to inform how we engage and disseminate the learnings from our innovation projects with stakeholders. The survey feedback showed that webinars are the preferred choice of communication channel for dissemination, and the innovation webinar series successfully increased stakeholders' awareness and understanding. A stakeholder survey carried out in October showed that 93% of the 45 respondents believed their understanding of ESB Networks' innovation projects and activities had increased or somewhat increased over the previous 12 months.

We look forward to continuing the Spring and Autumn Innovation Webinar series in 2021, with the format and selection of topics being developed through ongoing engagement and consultation with our stakeholders to ensure that they provide the greatest benefit to both our stakeholders and business alike.

STAKEHOLDER PANELS

Strategy/Purpose

Through stakeholder feedback received during our 2019 consultation on innovation, we noted the request for the ability for stakeholders and customers to apply for representation on external stakeholder advisory groups.

As a result, we have now established an Innovation Stakeholder Panel to provide a platform to enable open discussion and feedback with stakeholders from across all industry sectors on our innovation strategy, projects and activities.

The purpose of this panel is to:

- Guide us on areas that are changing in industry, economy and broader society (perhaps emerging concerns) and that may influence our thinking and planning
- Enable us to brief key stakeholder groups on ESB Networks innovation projects and activities, for example, projects that fall under our three innovation roadmaps; Future Customer, Climate Action and Network Resilience
- Create an additional channel for open and transparent external perspectives (and sounding board) for the development of our Innovation Strategy and associated roadmaps to ensure that the implementation of our innovation project portfolio provides enduring benefits to our customers and business
- Facilitate early engagement on the selection, prioritisation and timeline planning of our innovation projects by gaining a collaborative understanding of potential benefits and impacts of each proposed project to both our internal and external stakeholders.

Implementation

Following a call for expressions of interest in October 2020, 19 members across 10 stakeholder sectors were selected based on a number of criteria including diversity of sector and experience. In November 2020, the Terms of Reference were published on our website and in December 2020, the first Innovation Stakeholder Panel meeting was held. During this meeting, presentations and interactive discussions were held on ESB Networks' innovation projects and activities and on the topic of electrification of heat and transport. We also had an open feedback session with the panel members as to how we can make the panel a success.

We intend that this panel, chaired by ESB Networks, will meet approximately twice a year, in Spring and Autumn. Meeting invites will be issued a minimum of one month prior to the meeting date. An Agenda will be issued along with any required reading material at least one week in advance of the meeting. While current COVID-19 restrictions are in place, ESB Networks will hold the meetings via Skype for Business or MS Teams. Participation via video is strongly encouraged to facilitate interaction and discussion. All actions from these meetings will be captured in an action log and addressed as appropriate by ESB Networks. This action log will be issued in advance of each meeting with the Agenda.

Impact/Benefit

The panel is intended to provide a broad representation of key stakeholders with a vested interest in ESB Networks Innovation Strategy, projects and activities. The panel has representatives from the following areas: renewable electricity sector; energy flexibility and storage bodies; academia/research; e-heat; e-transport; professional institutions; energy agencies/authorities; equipment/systems manufacturers; utility/TSO; industry & large energy users; electricity suppliers and industry consultants.

The benefit of this new initiative is that we have a formal mechanism to discuss our innovation strategy and activities with our external stakeholders and to hear all views and concerns and suggestions from a broad representative group.

In addition to the innovation-focussed panel, we are also establishing a more broad based Customer and Society Panel, which we hope will help guide ESB Networks on areas that are changing in industry, the economy and our broader society (perhaps emerging concerns), that may influence our thinking and planning.

This second panel will have representatives from the following areas: vulnerable customers; business; industry; generators and suppliers; renewable electricity sector; sustainability and energy communities; safety and emergency response; infrastructure development; housing; farming; academia and youth. We reached out to stakeholders in late 2020 and plan to have this panel up and running in 2021. This will provide another important pathway for ESB Networks to engage with key customer and stakeholder groups regarding our business plans and activities. It will enable early engagement on key business initiatives, providing a collective understanding of potential benefits and impacts to both our internal and external stakeholders.

03.

STAKEHOLDER DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

Strategy/Purpose

Finding new and innovative ways to reach out to our stakeholders became a priority during 2020 as restrictions due to COVID-19 impacted on all our work practices. This is essential to continue to inform, engage and encourage dialogue with our wider stakeholder groups.

Implementation

ESB Networks developed a new stakeholder communications initiative in 2020 with the rollout of a quarterly, digital Stakeholder Newsletter.

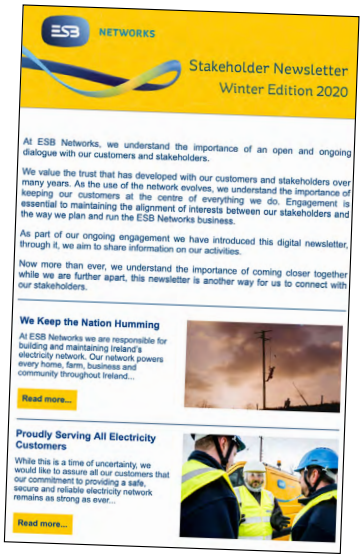
This communications piece will feature information on key developments and initiatives across the ESB Networks business, such as:

- project activity updates
- spotlights/case studies on various business activities
- information on engagement opportunities & events
- new 'products / services'
- interviews with Staff
- documents & Publications such as Public Consultations.

The stakeholder audience for this newsletter consists of a broad range of communities, organisations, representative bodies and industry groups.

The first edition was issued in November 2020, with articles on a wide range of topics from across the ESB Networks business, including:

- ESB Networks' media and advertising campaign - 'We Keep the Nation Humming'
- update on rollout of National Smart Metering Programme
- launch of New Connections Online Application Process
- launch of Demand and Generation Capacity Heatmaps
- announcement of Enduring Connection Policy (ECP) Offers
- Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities and Activities (Innovation Forum and Strategic Webinar Series)
- improvements to Stakeholder Engagement channels (update to website and introduction of LinkedIn social media channel)
- information on scheduled Public Consultations.


ESB NETWORKS

Stakeholder Newsletter
Winter Edition 2020

At ESB Networks, we understand the importance of an open and ongoing dialogue with our customers and stakeholders.

We value the trust that has developed with our customers and stakeholders over many years. As the use of the network evolves, we understand the importance of keeping our customers at the centre of everything we do. Engagement is essential to maintaining the alignment of interests between our stakeholders and the way we plan and run the ESB Networks business.

As part of our ongoing engagement we have introduced this digital newsletter, through it, we aim to share information on our activities.

Now more than ever, we understand the importance of coming closer together while we are further apart, this newsletter is another way for us to connect with our stakeholders.

We Keep the Nation Humming

At ESB Networks we are responsible for building and maintaining Ireland's electricity network. Our network powers every home, farm, business and community throughout Ireland...

Read more...

Proudly Serving All Electricity Customers

While this is a time of uncertainty, we would like to assure all our customers that our commitment to providing a safe, secure and reliable electricity network remains as strong as ever...

Read more...

Impact/Benefit

This newsletter provides a further opportunity to inform, engage and encourage dialogue with our wider stakeholder group.

It allows us to reach our stakeholders in a simple but effective way, providing them with information from across the ESB Networks business, ensuring that they are kept informed of our actions and activities. It also affords us the opportunity to hear from out stakeholders, as we ask for their input and feedback, and for them to inform on what topics or areas they would like us to feature in our newsletter editions.

The creation and roll-out of this Stakeholder Newsletter was in direct response to feedback from our stakeholders – those who were seeking to learn and hear more about the activities of ESB Networks.

ESB NETWORKS STRATEGIC WEBINAR SERIES

Strategy/Purpose

ESB Networks had planned to host an annual stakeholder conference in October 2020. However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, the event could not proceed as originally planned. Rather than postpone the event, it was decided to host an alternative series of strategic webinars addressing issues of significant importance to the electricity industry.

Implementation

Taking into consideration the availability and accessibility of our stakeholders, ESB Networks' strategic webinar series Powering the Change was structured in such a way as to provide stakeholders the opportunity to engage in two-way dialogue with us (listening and conversing) in an attendee-centric way. With the rise in events moving from physical to virtual, this stakeholder engagement event was created with the attendee in mind, one that was informative and engaging but also cognisant of their availability and time.

With that in mind, the series was structured as six one-hour webinar sessions, spanning from 2020 to 2021. An important consideration when developing this strategic webinar series was that we wanted to use the opportunity to not only inform stakeholders but to also actively engage with them and create a dialogue. We structured the series so that each session is as interactive and engaging for our attendees as possible, with opportunities to participate in Q&A sessions with speakers and panellists, comment and share feedback. Each session involves a broad conversation with experts across different and varying organisations (i.e., government, industry, academia, etc.)

On December 9th 2020, ESB Networks held the first webinar session as part of its strategic webinar series.

"Powering the Change" titled: "Empowering the Active Energy Citizen & Energy Communities". In this session, we looked at the actions and activities required to support and empower active energy citizenship, putting this into context by exploring real-life examples of active energy communities in Ireland. The session was led by ESB Networks Network Development and Electrification Manager, (ESB Networks), with presentations by the Research Centre for Energy, Climate, Marine and Innovation (MaREI) and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). As part of this session, we also heard from ESB Networks Dingle Project Ambassador and Active Energy Citizen.

Impact/Benefit

Stakeholder feedback for this event was highly positive, with stakeholders asking for webinar sessions of this type to be continued and with strong expressions of interest in attendance at the remaining sessions of the series.

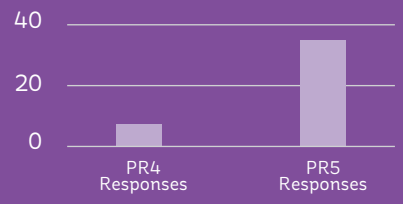
The following further topics are proposed for the "Powering the Change" strategic webinar series:

- Collective Action for Climate Action
- The distribution network – Investing in a low carbon future
- Enabling the electrification of heat and transport
- Connecting Community-Led Renewable Energy Projects
- Transforming Energy Systems for a Low Carbon Future

04.

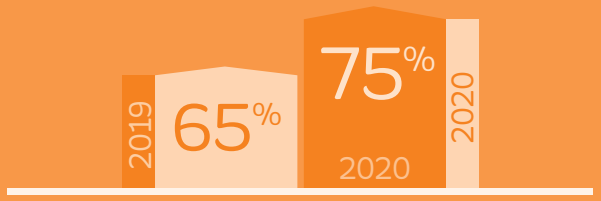
MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Improved stakeholder engagement leading to step change in level of stakeholder consultation responses when comparing PR4 to PR5 leading to a better informed and improved outcome



PRICE REVIEW STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Research conducted by Red C, has shown that awareness of smart meters in the general population increased from **65%** in September 2019 to **75%** in September 2020. A rise of **10%** due to the coordinated industry engagement activity in 2020



SMART METERING

Construction Safety

Website views

In 2020 construction safety section of the website had **28.3K** pageviews, representing a **65%** increase on 2019

1.6m social media impressions

SAFETY

93%

A stakeholder survey carried out in October 2020 showed that **93%** of the 45 respondents believed their understanding of ESB Networks' innovation projects and activities had improved over the previous 12 months

84% ▲ 78%

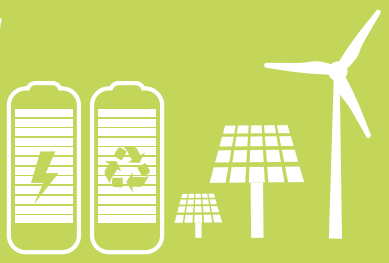
Innovation Brand score on social media increased by **6%** over 2020 (increased from **78%** Q3 2019 to **84%** Q3 2020)

Website Statistics for Innovation Webpages show traffic to the innovation pages is steadily growing as we create new and engaging content for our audiences

INNOVATION

Increased engagement with renewable generation stakeholders/ developers throughout 2020 enabling:

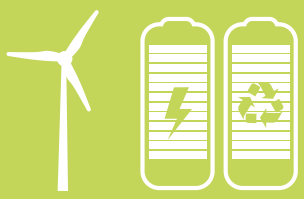
- 45 modifications to previous grid connection offers totalling 348 MW of renewable energy
- 45 new connection offers totalling 349 MW of renewable energy (69% solar, 22% wind, 9% battery storage)



Extensive engagement with industry stakeholders in 2020 enabling connection of:

- 132 MW of renewable wind generation
- 128 MW of battery storage

By the end of 2020, ESB Networks had over 4,600MW renewable generation connected to its distribution and transmission networks, supplying almost **40%** of Ireland's electricity during 2020



CONNECTING RENEWABLES

11 formal responses to the public consultation on the Electrification of Heat and Transport Strategy from a wide cross-section of the stakeholders including suppliers, generators and local authority representative groups

ELECTRIFICATION

90% customer satisfaction for our **Customer Care Contact Centre** (Dec 2020) an increase of 11%

82% overall customer satisfaction (Dec 2020)

Improved engagement leading to online applications for connections increasing from **48%** to **58%** over 2020

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Active engagement with industry stakeholders on storm management.

Seven named storms in 2020, with Storm Ellen resulting in **180,000** customers without power, **140,000** of whom were restored on Day 1

RESILIENCE AND GROWTH

Extensive engagement with industry and market stakeholders enabled the rapid implementation of a Market Change Request for COVID-19 Supplier Suspension process resulting in Use of System charges being temporarily waived to electricity Suppliers on behalf of **9,000** customers.

SUPPLIER FOCUSSED INITIATIVES

05.

TABLES

Table 1 Consultations in 2020

ESB Networks-led & ESB Networks/EirGrid joint public consultations in 2020

TITLE	OBJECTIVE	MECHANISM	TIMING	METRIC/IMPACT
ESB Networks Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Framework	Seek feedback on ESB Networks proposed engagement strategy framework such that it is fully informed and shaped by both our business and stakeholders needs	ESB Networks Consultation	December 2019-January 2020	8 stakeholder responses leading to more than 6 improvements (e.g., earlier engagement, clearer reporting, objectives, metrics, improved pathways, website improvements)
ESB Networks Strategic Stakeholder Plan 2020	Seek feedback on ESB Networks proposed engagement plan for 2020 such that it is fully informed and shaped by both our business and stakeholders needs	ESB Networks Consultation	December 2019-January 2020	8 stakeholder responses leading to ongoing improvements as documented in 'How stakeholder Feedback is shaping our engagement'
Innovation for the Network of the Future 2020	Consultation to share information on ESB Networks innovation strategy, activities/projects	ESB Networks Consultation	March 2020	19 stakeholder responses and feedback published in March 2020 (refer Table 2)
ESB Networks Report on Stakeholder Engagement in 2019	Describe and capture our stakeholder engagement approach and activities during 2019 and seek stakeholder views and feedback on our engagement performance for 2020	ESB Networks Consultation	April 2020	13 stakeholder responses and feedback report was submitted to the CRU NSEE panel in May 2020
Microgeneration Framework	To provide our customers and stakeholders with the relevant information to assist them in understanding what is involved in the transition from consumer to prosumer and to further kickstart a discussion on the topic of microgeneration	ESB Networks Consultation	May 2020	14 stakeholder responses and feedback led to further explanatory publications. Full feedback report published in December 2020 (refer Table 2 & case study)
Request for EOI for partnering with ESB Networks on the Dingle Project's P2P TRIAL	To seek Expressions of Interest to becoming a project partner with ESB Networks to undertake a peer-to-peer energy trial on the Dingle peninsula	ESB Networks Consultation	June 2020	Poor response resulting in no appointment of a trial partner. It was decided not to proceed with the trial
MV Customer Connection Standard Module – Electric Vehicle Charging Hubs in Urban Environment	Public Consultation on Compact standard substations for demand and generation connections	ESB Networks Consultation	July 2020	17 stakeholder responses. Consultation was supported by stakeholder information webinar in September 2020 to further engage and listen to stakeholders' feedback. As a result of these engagements, a pilot is planned for 2021
Joint TSO & TAO Investment Planning and Delivery Report 2019	Seek stakeholder feedback on TSO & TAO Electricity Transmission Performance Report 2019	ESB Networks/ EirGrid Consultation	August-September 2020	Stakeholder engagement enabled approval by the CRU and publication of final report December 2020
Joint TSO & TAO Electricity Transmission Performance Report 2020	Seek Stakeholder feedback on TSO & TAO Investment Planning and Delivery Report 2020	ESB Networks/ EirGrid Consultation	August-September 2020	Stakeholder engagement enabled approval by the CRU and publication of final report December 2020

TITLE	OBJECTIVE	MECHANISM	TIMING	METRIC/IMPACT
Distribution System Security and Planning Standards **Non-Wires Alternatives to Network Development** **Non-Firm Access Connections for Distribution Connected Distributed Generators**	These project consultations were part of the HV and MV Smarter Customer Connections	ESB Networks Consultations	September 2020	Collaborative consultation with stakeholders enabled a review of how the standards needed to evolve to meet the changes in the electricity industry, whilst cost effectively maintaining a safe, secure and reliable distribution system. The new Standards approved by the CRU enabled the project to move into its implementation phase
Hybrid Working Group Multiple Legal Entities Consultation (Part of the FlexTech Integration Initiative)	Joint TSO/DSO consultation to gain stakeholders' perspectives on options for Multiple Legal Entities sharing a single connection.	ESB Networks/ EirGrid Consultation	September 2020	12 stakeholder responses received. Feedback will be published in Q1 2021
Distribution Annual Performance Report 2019	Seek stakeholder feedback on Distribution Annual Performance Report 2019	ESB Networks Consultation	October 2020	Stakeholder engagement enabled approval by the CRU and publication of final report October 2020
Electrification of Heat & Transport Strategy	To set out ESB Networks vision and approach to facilitating the electrification of heat and transport.	ESB Networks Consultation	October-November 2020	11 stakeholder responses to consultation which was supported by an information webinar in October 2020. Feedback reflected in final electrification strategy published Q1 2021
Capacity Provision for Growth in Microgeneration Connections	To seek feedback on the current capacity provision level of 30% of one HV/MV transformer capacity for future growth in microgeneration	ESB Networks Consultation	December 2020	2 stakeholder responses and feedback will inform the final CRU approved decision to be published in 2021
New Solutions for Distribution System Interfaces for Public On-Street EV Charging	To seek feedback on how we approach facilitating public on-street EV charge points	ESB Networks Consultation	December 2020	5 stakeholder responses providing valuable feedback on proposed approach facilitating public on-street EV charge points
Smart Metering: Customer awareness & satisfaction research for the NSMP	Red C ran 4 waves of research throughout the year to monitor customer sentiment and concerns	Customer surveys	Q1-Q4 2020	Results show a rise of 10% in awareness of smart meters in the general population due to the coordinated industry engagement activity in 2020
MV Customer Connection - MV EGIP Standard Module Substation	To seek feedback on ESB Networks proposed standard options to facilitate faster and optimised connection options for renewable and customer connections to our network	ESB Networks Consultation	December 2020-January 2021	15 stakeholder responses to consultation which was supported by a stakeholder information webinar. Feedback will be published Q2 2021 and a showcase unit will be also be installed at the ESB Networks National Training Centre, Portlaoise
ESB Networks Engagement Strategy & Plan 2021	Seek feedback on ESB Networks proposed engagement strategy and plan for 2022 such that it is fully informed and shaped by both our business and stakeholders needs	ESB Networks Consultation	December 2020-February 2021	9 stakeholder responses providing valuable feedback on how to improve our Strategy & Plan. Response will be published Q2 2021

Table 2 Publications in 2020

Reports/information booklets/data sharing on website:

PUBLICATION	OBJECTIVE	MECHANISM	TIMING
Standard Prices for Generator Connections	To explain the CRU approved standard pricing approach used for processing generator connection offers	Publication on ESB Networks website	January 2020
ESB Networks' Response to Stakeholder Feedback Received from Consultation on Innovation for the Network of the Future	To summarise the responses received during the consultation process on the 'Innovation for the Network of the Future 2020' and to explain ESB Networks will respond to this feedback	Publication on ESB Networks website	March 2020
ESB Networks Innovation Pipeline Projects	To provide the list of proposed projects in ESB Networks 2020 pipeline of possible future innovation projects. These projects have been proposed to address the challenges identified by our Innovation Strategy and provide benefits to customers	Publication on ESB Networks website	March 2020
Response paper on ESB Networks Report on Stakeholder Engagement in 2019	To summarise the responses received during the consultation process on 'ESB Networks Report on Stakeholder Engagement in 2019' and to explain how ESB Networks will respond to this feedback	Publication on the CRU website	April 2020
Capacity Heatmaps	To provide an indication of available network capacity for new demand and generation customers	Interactive map on ESB Networks website	May 2020
Guide Non-Firm Access Connections for Distribution Connected Distributed Generators	To outline ESB Networks plan for the introduction and development of Non-Firm Access (NFA) for connection of distributed generators (DG) to the distribution system	Publication on ESB Networks website	July 2020
Assessment of the scope for Higher Penetrations of Distributed Generation on the Low Voltage Distribution Network	This report seeks to outline the possible technical impacts on the distribution network of increasing levels of microgeneration on the distribution network for a non-technical audience	Publication on ESB Networks website	July 2020
FlexTech Response to Consultation Paper	The FlexTech Integration Initiative is being co-ordinated by EirGrid and SONI with the support of ESB Networks and NIE Networks. The aim of the initiative is to break key barriers across a broad spectrum of technical, operational, commercial, regulatory, and market challenges to facilitate the integration of renewables	Joint EirGrid/SONI/ ESB Networks website publication	July 2020
Ruleset for Enduring Connection Policy Stage 2 (ECP-2)	To explain the ECP-2 ruleset for connection to either the transmission or distribution systems	Joint ESB Networks/ EirGrid website publication	August 2020
ESB Networks Proposed Statement of Generator Standard Charges	ESB Networks carried out a review of the Generator Standard Charges and submitted the proposed new charges to CRU for approval which included the removal of civil construction costs as standard charges	Publication on ESB Networks website	August 2020

PUBLICATION	OBJECTIVE	MECHANISM	TIMING
All-island Network Code Stakeholder Forum Slideshow	The 8th All-island Network Code Stakeholder Forum took place on the 12th August 2020. This Forum provides information on changes to connection standards, European rules for the electricity market and grid operations, emergency procedures and on other areas of European electricity policy	Publication on ESB Networks website	August 2020
Guidelines for the Application of Connection Network Codes to Existing Users	To detail the criteria which will be used by ESB Networks and EirGrid in relation to the modernisation, refurbishment or equipment replacement for existing users which would require a user to comply in part or in full with the requirements of the European Connection Network Codes	Joint ESB Networks/ EirGrid publication	September 2020
Close Out Report - Intelligent Secondary Substation Monitoring (WinterPeak)	To gain valuable knowledge of the effect on the LV network of the integration of Low Carbon Technologies (LCTs) such as heat pumps, solar PV and Electric Vehicles, ESB Networks are trialling a number of different innovative monitoring devices to fully understand what is required to effectively monitor the LV network	Publication on ESB Networks website	September 2020
ESB Networks DAC Statement of Charges as approved by the Commission for Energy Regulation	This document lists the Standard Connection Charges for providing individual connection points for users of the Distribution System	Publication on ESB Networks website	October 2020
Terms of Reference - ESB Networks Innovation Stakeholder Panel	This document details the Terms of Reference for the Stakeholder Innovation Panel. It outlines the purpose and objective of the panel, the structure and timelines for meetings, and the panel membership and sectors represented	Publication on ESB Networks website	November 2020
Laois - Kilkenny Reinforcement Project Q&A	To provide an update on the Laois-Kilkenny Reinforcement Project. Q&A prepared by the Laois-Kilkenny Reinforcement Project to help address local concerns about this project	Publication on ESB Networks website	November 2020
Innovation Strategy Close Out Report - Heatmap Project	To provide stakeholders and customers with better information, insight and transparency in relation to the Heatmap project and explain the next phase based on stakeholder feedback	Publication on ESB Networks website	November 2020
How Stakeholder Feedback is shaping our Engagement	This report summarises how stakeholder feedback received during the 2020 is shaping ESB Networks engagement approach in 2020 and beyond	Publication on ESB Networks website	November 2020

TITLE	OBJECTIVE	MECHANISM	TIMING
Stakeholder Newsletter	To provide regular updates and overview of engagement activities/ opportunities between ESB Networks and stakeholders	Quarterly newsletter emailed to wide range of stakeholders and link on ESB Networks website to subscribe	November 2020, & December 2020
Community-led renewable energy projects guidebook	To help support and explain the steps involved in connecting a community-led renewable energy project to the electricity distribution network. This 20-page guidebook aims to increase customer knowledge of the connection process, CRU policies and to highlight the lower barrier to entry for community-led projects	Publication on ESB Networks website	December 2020
Distribution Annual Performance Report 2019	Annual summary of the Distribution System Operator's activities over the previous calendar year	Publication on ESB Networks website	December 2020
Joint TSO & TAO Investment Planning and Delivery FinalReport 2019	Final CRU approved report on the TSO & TAO Investment Planning and Delivery for 2019	Joint ESB Networks/ EirGrid website publication	December 2020
Joint TSO & TAO Electricity Transmission Performance Final Report 2019	Final CRU approved report on the TSO & TAO Electricity Transmission Performance Report 2019	Joint ESB Networks/ EirGrid website publication	December 2020
The Dingle Electrification Project: Sharing the Learnings from the Peer-to-Peer Energy Trading Objective	To outline the activities undertaken by ESB Networks in furtherance of the Peer-to-Peer (P2P) objective of the Dingle Project, the learnings garnered from these activities and proposed future steps to be undertaken to increase learnings on the potential impact of P2P energy on the operation of the distribution network	Publication on ESB Networks website	December 2020
Close out Report on SOGNO – Smart Monitoring for Increased Resilience	The main objective of the SOGNO project was to present and demonstrate a completely new model of automation of the electrical distribution systems, based on the delivery of automation as a service	Publication on ESB Networks website	December 2020
NET-FLEX – Innovation Project progress Report	To provide an update on the Net-Flex project which follows on from the Smarter HV and MV Customer Connections project that laid the groundwork for Non-Wires Alternatives (NWA) to conventional network upgrades	Publication on ESB Networks website	December 2020
ESB Networks Innovation Project Portfolio Q4 2020 Summary Report	To report on the status of our Innovation Project activities as at the end of 2020 in support of transparency and the availability of more information in relation to our innovation projects	Publication on ESB Networks website	December 2020
Microgeneration Framework Consultation Response Enabling the Transition from Consumer to Prosumer	This publication details the Microgeneration Framework Consultation Response Enabling the Transition from Consumer to Prosumer	Publication on ESB Networks website	December 2020

Table 3 Pathways to engagement

Meetings, working groups, events/webinars in 2020:

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	MECHANISM	TIMING	AUDIENCE
Innovation Spring Series of Webinars 2020	To share information on our innovation activities and the dissemination of project learnings and outcomes. Through a series of targeted interactive webinars on: 1. ESB Networks' Network Flexibility Project 2. The Dingle Electrification Project - Peer-to-Peer Trial 3. ESB Networks' Innovation Project Identification and Evaluation	Interactive webinars on skype for Business with menti.com used to capture stakeholder feedback	April-May 2020	A wide range of stakeholders from across the 10 Innovation Stakeholder sectors
Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP)	The Distribution Code is the set of rules that specifies the technical aspects and relationships between the DSO and all other users. The Distribution Code is kept under review and updated as required through the Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP). The DCRP meets quarterly and is chaired and coordinated by ESB Networks as the DSO	Working Group Quarterly online meetings	Q1–Q4	Members of the DCRP - representative of various types of Users of the Distribution System, plus the DSO, TSO and the CRU.
Series of bilateral meetings with various industry stakeholders	To encourage a deeper engagement and promote collaboration on a broad range of issues facing both ESB Networks and our stakeholders	Online meetings & webinars	Ongoing	A wide range of stakeholders including academic institutions, government entities and organisations, industry trade associations, electricity suppliers and generators, renewable energy sector including new energy actors such as Demand-Side Units (DSUs) and battery storage providers.
Connecting Renewables	ECP-2 Rules and batch formation explanatory webinar & Capacity Heatmaps explanatory webinar	Interactive webinars on skype for Business with menti.com used to capture stakeholder feedback	July 2020	Renewable Energy sector/ communities
Connecting customers	Presentation on ESB Networks role, Price Review 5, Capacity Heatmaps, network capacity in greater Dublin region and the Electrification strategy	Microsoft Teams Presentation	July 2020	Dublin Chamber of Commerce
Price Review 5	To present the detail of the draft determination for PR5 and discuss the potential impact for our customers and stakeholders. This two-way communication enabled a collaborative consultation response and the contribution of our stakeholders resulted in material improvements between the draft and final determination	Interactive webinars on skype for Business with menti.com used to capture stakeholder feedback	Q2-Q3	A wide range of Industry Stakeholders including academic institutions, government entities and organisations, industry trade associations, electricity suppliers and generators, renewable energy sector including new energy actors such as Demand-Side Units (DSUs) and battery storage providers.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	MECHANISM	TIMING	AUDIENCE
Bilateral Meetings with Electricity Suppliers	To collaborate specifically on ESB Networks innovation activities, to hear about the challenges suppliers are facing and the solutions they are working on, and to look at potential areas where we may work together in the future	Online meetings	Q2-Q3	Electricity suppliers
Lean Connections Project Engagement	Engagement with key stakeholder groups on the development of the Lean Connections Project	Online meetings	Q3/Q4	Renewable energy sector
Innovation Autumn Series of Webinars 2020	Continuing the sharing of information on our innovation activities through a series of targeted interactive webinars as informed by stakeholders 1. Compact Standard Modules for Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Connections 2. Electrification of Transport 3. Active System Management Programme - Delivering the Future DSO 4. Interactive Session on ESB Networks' Pipeline of Innovation Projects 5. The SOGNO Project Smart Monitoring for Increased Resilience	Interactive webinars on skype for Business with menti.com used to capture stakeholder feedback.	September -October 2020	A wide range of stakeholders from across the 10 Innovation Stakeholder sectors
Smart Metering: Engagement with industry - Industry Liaison Group & Comms and Engagement Working Group	Monthly meetings with the Programme's Partners to discuss open items / plan ahead	Online meetings	Monthly	CRU, DECC, SEAI and electricity suppliers
Retail Market Services	**Industry Governance Group (IGG)** To update all market participants on retail market activities in the Republic of Ireland, (RoI)	Online meetings	Monthly	All electricity market participants including EirGrid, CRU, ESB Networks and all electricity suppliers
	Extraordinary (IGG) Additional meetings to address COVID related retail market issues	Online meetings	Weekly from March to June 2020	All electricity market participants including EirGrid, CRU, ESB Networks and all electricity suppliers
	Retail Electricity Market Coordinated Working Group (REMCOWG) To update all market participants on coordinated retail market activities across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland	Online meetings	Monthly	All electricity market participants across Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland including the relevant utility regulators CRU & UR, Network operators EirGrid, ESB Networks, NIE and all electricity suppliers
Construction Safety Partnership Advisory Committee	Promote best practice of electricity safety in construction	Quarterly online meetings	Q1-Q4	CIF, HSA, LGMA, Engineers Ireland, SOLAS, Govt depts.
Safety Joint Utility Forum	Share safety best practice and learnings across utilities	Bi-annual online meeting	Q1 & Q4	Public utilities, GNI, EIR, Irish Water
Community-led Renewables Energy Liaison Panel	Introduce the initiatives being provided by ESB Networks to assist community-led renewable energy projects	Regular online engagement with stakeholders in relation to the connection of community-led renewable energy projects, (website, dedicated email)	Q3-Q4	Renewable Energy sector/ communities

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	MECHANISM	TIMING	AUDIENCE
ESB Networks Strategic Webinar Series : "Empowering the Active Energy Citizen & Energy Communities	To discuss the actions and activities required to support and empower active energy citizenship, putting this into context by exploring real-life examples of active energy	First of a six part series (spanning 2020 to 2021) of interactive webinars on various topics under the heading "Powering the Change"	December 2020	A wide range of stakeholders from across the renewable energy sector/academia/ government entities and organisations and communities
External Innovation Panel	Provide early engagement on the selection & prioritisation & timeline planning of our innovation projects, by gaining a collaborative understanding of potential benefits and impacts of each proposed project to both our internal and external stakeholders	Bi-annual Interactive webinar	December 2020	Micro/Mini generation E-Heat & E-Transport Energy Flexibility & Storage Bodies Academic/Research Industry Consultants Energy Agencies/ Authorities Equipment/Systems Manufacturers Electricity Suppliers Utility/TSO Renewable Electricity Sector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