

# Our **Zero** e-Mission Future



**Electricity Association of Ireland**



ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY OF MUSIC

7<sup>th</sup> November 2024



ELECTRICITY  
ASSOCIATION  
OF IRELAND

# Overview

On November 7th the Electricity Association of Ireland were delighted to provide an informative and engaging session on the topic 'Our Zero e-Mission Future'.

Industry leaders across generation and supply gathered at the Whyte Hall at the Royal Irish Academy of Music to discuss the developments being made by their business to facilitate a cleaner, greener energy supply.

At a time of increased government ambition and with a little over 5 years to go to 2030, now is the time for the Sector to turn its attention to achieving a post-2030 Zero e-Mission Future and ensure that the correct policy signals stimulate appropriate market incentives and the right investments for a cost-effective transition.

This conference was aptly timed as it gave the audience an insight into the future of energy in Ireland and a perfect platform to launch several policy papers that outline the collective view of the electricity sector on achieving our post 2030 zero e-Mission.





## REGISTRATION → 08:15 - 09:00



**MC: Kevin O'Sullivan** Environment and Science Editor at the Irish Times

## SESSION 1 → 09:00 - 09:45

### Keynote Speakers – Energy, Enterprise and the Economy



**Ian Snowden**  
Permanent Secretary,  
Department for the Economy



**Declan Hughes**  
Secretary General,  
Department of Enterprise,  
Trade and Employment

## SESSION 2 → 09:45 - 11:00

### CEO Roundtable – Ambition for our Zero e-Mission Future



**Ian Thom**  
CEO, Energia



**Klair Neenan**  
MD, SSE Airtricity



**John Rooney**  
CEO, Flogas



**Claire Madden**  
GC, Bord Gáis Energy



**Pat Fenlon**  
Director, ESB

## SESSION 3 → Retail Panel 11:30 - 12:30

### A Retail Market fit for the Energy Transition



**Colm O'Gormain**  
SSE



**Caoimhe McWeeney**  
Energia



**John Lawlor**  
Electric Ireland



**Paddy Fitzgerald**  
Bord Gáis Energy

## SESSION 4 → Markets Panel 12:30 - 13:30

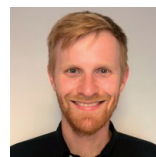
### An Investment Framework for a Decarbonised Future



**Stacey Feldman**  
SSE



**Paraic Higgins**  
ESB



**David Morrow**  
Energia



**John Reilly**  
Bord na Móna

Closing Remarks 13:30

Lunch 13:45

# Introductions

## Peter O'Shea

**Chairman of the Electricity Association of Ireland  
Head of Corporate and Regulatory Affairs, ESB Group**

Peter gave an opening address, emphasising the importance of electricity as an enabler for social and economic development. Peter went on to recognise the role EAI plays and will continue to play as an insight into the collective interest of a fully integrated transition to net zero, which reflects the aims of the Government.

Peter noted the EAI as a valuable asset on both sides of the border, connecting an all-island grid in a unified aim. Peter highlighted how pivotal a time it is for the energy sector and emphasised the importance of the role that the participants of the conference will play over the coming years.



Kevin O'Sullivan



## Kevin O'Sullivan

**Environment and Science Editor  
The Irish Times**

In his opening remarks, Kevin touched on some of the current issues the world is facing, such as the election of Donald Trump and what influence he could have on the energy sector. Kevin also introduced the EAI's policy papers which were launched at the Conference. Kevin expertly chaired each of the sessions and led the discussions, pushing our panel of speakers to touch on a wide range of topics.

# Session 1 | Keynote Speakers – Energy, Enterprise and the Economy

Ian Snowden



## Ian Snowden

**Permanent Secretary  
Department for Economy**

Mr. Snowden gave an overview of the energy crisis. Including the challenges we're facing, the changes that need to be seen, the progress that has been made so far, as well as current and future projects. He placed an emphasis on the need for extensive collaboration to undertake the radical system change that is needed.

Looking into the future, he commented on the fact that we have only '60 months' to meet our ambitious climate goal of 80% renewables by 2030. On top of this, he referred to policies for offshore wind, Northern Ireland's RP7, Our Energy Future, and the introduction of smart networks. He remarked that we need to ensure that communities benefit from a just transition to 80% renewables, ensuring the cost doesn't disproportionately fall on vulnerable people. Overall, the main message was of a need for an all of government approach to see a communal impact.

## Declan Hughes

**Secretary General  
Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment**

Mirroring Ian Snowden's focus on all-island collaboration, Mr. Hughes commented on the influence the recent US presidential election may have on Ireland, given its position as America's 7th largest investor and raised many of the challenges to come in the future. He recognised Ireland's strong skilled workforce, continued economic growth, and large levels of FDI, making it ready to take on challenges that may arise.

Mr. Hughes shed light on the €750m allocated in budget 2025 to the energy sector, while highlighting the two main issues we face: high energy costs, and the need for mechanisms for delivery of renewable energy and increased demand. He highlighted the once in a generation step up in grid infrastructure we are currently facing, while emphasising the need for a plan led approach to grid integration of renewables.

He went over various initiatives of the Department, including the Power Up Grant and the work of Enterprise Ireland in achieving a decrease in carbon emissions of 35,000 tonnes, and their focus on small and large companies. He placed emphasis on Ireland's untapped potential for offshore wind, and in his conclusion commented that "the future is exciting in terms of electrification."

Declan Hughes



# Session 2 | CEO Roundtable – Ambition for Our Zero e-Mission Future

## Ian Thom

### CEO Energia

Ian opened by commenting that it has never been a more interesting or exciting time to be in the energy sector, with the challenges and opportunities that are on the horizon.

He outlined Energia’s current ambition to increase delivery of renewables by 2030 through investments in offshore and onshore wind, solar etc. While such investments are crucial, Mr. Thom also raised that Energia are helping customers take on their role in the energy transition through the provision of innovative and differentiated products. He noted that from generation to end consumption, a whole of system approach is needed to deliver our net zero future.



Kevin O'Sullivan and Ian Thom

## Klair Neenan

### Managing Director, SSE

Klair outlined SSE’s goal to provide the energy needed today but also building for the energy of tomorrow, and explained that SSE are always looking at innovative technologies and solutions that can best drive Ireland to Net Zero.

Echoing Ian’s point on the role of end consumers, Klair provided an example of this through SSE’s Energy Hub App which provides accessible consumer insights with the aim for customers to understand their consumption behaviour.

Klair discussed SSE’s huge experience and expertise in wind energy. They are currently working on building the world’s largest offshore wind farm, building the largest floating wind farm, and are operating Scotland’s largest offshore windfarm, all while looking to develop onshore wind as well. She also commented on the recent US election result, outlining that the imperative to address climate change will not go away. She concluded by reiterating their ambition for Ireland and the UK.



Klair Neenan and John Rooney

## John Rooney

CEO, FloGas

John remarked that FloGas sees gas as a means to transition away from other higher carbon fuels, with the ultimate aim to eventually lead onto hydrogen and electrification. He stressed the need for an orderly energy transition and that FloGas was ready to play its role in that transition.

Claire Madden and Pat Fenlon



## Claire Madden

General Counsel, Bord Gáis Energy

Claire commented on how they are fundamentally repurposing their business to be a leader to a greener fairer future. This includes investing in a number of fronts such as increasing their share of renewables from 500MW to 2200MW by 2030 and aiming to bring online two new peaker plants next year because of Ireland’s fundamental need for security of supply.

Claire noted that they have entered into a number of partnerships, including those to develop offshore wind and an ammonia fuel plant in Cork. Other partnerships include teaming up with the IFA in the rollout of solar microgeneration.

## Pat Fenlon

Director, ESB

Pat commented on the fact that all the companies share similar challenges. He noted that effective system services is critical to decarbonising generation.

ESB’s focus is on investing in a more resilient network. He also noted their investment in offshore wind as well as the smart meter rollout.

Pat explained that there has been a change in customer sentiment away from climate towards cost as being of greatest importance. On this, he viewed targeted measures as being more appropriate than a one-size-fits-all approach. He concluded by emphasising the importance of engaging customers as well as addressing the current market design.



# Christmas Wishlist

Getting everyone into an early Christmas spirit, Kevin sought each panelist's Christmas Wishlist for the energy sector especially in the context of the upcoming General Election.

“ Supports for emerging technologies to identify and promote new low-carbon generation

Klair Neenan

“ Policy development and support for indigenous biomethane production

John Rooney

“ Support for the decarbonisation of heat

Pat Fenlon

“ Policy certainty – the projects for 2030 are needed now therefore Government need to provide a clear policy outline as to what the post 2030 electricity system will look like

Ian Thom

“ Policy certainty for offshore wind development

Klair Neenan

“ Further investment into the grid

Claire Madden



# Session 3 | Retail Panel – A Retail Market fit for the Energy Transition

The retail panel brought the consumer into focus with members of the EAI Retail Committee. The informative discussion showed the commitments Suppliers are making to protect and enable customers as we transition to net zero. Discussions on the National Smart Metering Programme and the delivery of smart services took centre stage.

**As the National Smart Metering Programme approaches two million installations, what are the facilitators needed to increase the uptake of smart services and extract value from a consumer’s smart meter?**

## Caoimhe McWeeney

Vice Chair, EAI Retail Committee

Caoimhe outlined that the key facilitators needed to increase the uptake of smart services centre around consumer empowerment. She focused specifically on smart meter data access and acknowledged the significant amount of work that the CRU has undertaken. Without smart data access, Suppliers will not be able to fully advise customers on what smart tariff offer the best value to the customer. On the customer side, without streamlined data access customers cannot understand the consumption behaviour changes which could save them money. Clearly this is a significant facilitator to leverage the smart metering programme.



## Colm Ó Gormain

Chair, EAI Retail Committee

Colm raised the need for automation of market systems. This includes building the market systems that can streamline the reconcillation of microgeneration payments and being future-proofed for future energy services such as energy sharing. Simplifying these processes reduces administrative burdens on Suppliers and makes for a more simplified customer journey.



John Lawlor

**Is there a move from suppliers to ease the pinch of the energy crisis?**

**John Lawlor**

Policy Manager, Electric Ireland

In acknowledgement of the challenges customers face when managing their energy bills, Electric Ireland provides a Hardship Fund for those who require additional support. Suppliers have also signed up to the Energy Engage code which is a voluntary commitment from suppliers designed to protect engaging customers experiencing difficulty paying their bills. Furthermore, payment plans are on offer from suppliers for those who would like to explore alternative methods of payment.

**What role do you see suppliers playing in promoting electrification of heating and transport for domestic customers?**

**Paddy Fitzgerald**

Policy Manager, Bord Gáis Energy

Acknowledging the EAI's electrification paper, Paddy raised that emphasis should be placed on the struggle of SMEs to electrify as large enterprises have strong financial incentives to electrify. He called for further grants for small to medium enterprises to help them in electrifying heating systems where there is currently little development.

He outlined that Suppliers have a role in advising on appropriate tariffs for businesses but the focus needs to be on the grants and incentives that these businesses have access to.



Paddy Fitzgerald

# Session 4 | Markets Panel – An Investment Framework for a Decarbonised Future

The markets panel focused on the current state of the market, including challenges and opportunities, as well as the investment needed for the transition towards net zero whilst handling the significant increase in demand.

## Does the current winter outlook give you confidence in Security of Supply going forward?

### Stacy Feldmann

Chair, EAI Markets Committee

Stacy began her remarks by emphasizing her caution alongside optimism on the winter outlook. She discussed the role of Capacity Markets in security of supply. Since 2018, there has been a steep learning curve, and while there is currently breathing space to make changes, the same mistakes cannot be made again.

She also discussed the role of interconnectors that while they may have a positive effect on security of supply at certain points in time, they are not necessarily a one-stop-shop solution for everything. There may be points where the interconnector flows exacerbate a security of supply crisis. She emphasized that rigorous modelling is essential to ensure that interconnectors are an aid to Ireland's electricity sector.



Stacy Feldmann



David Morrow and John Reilly

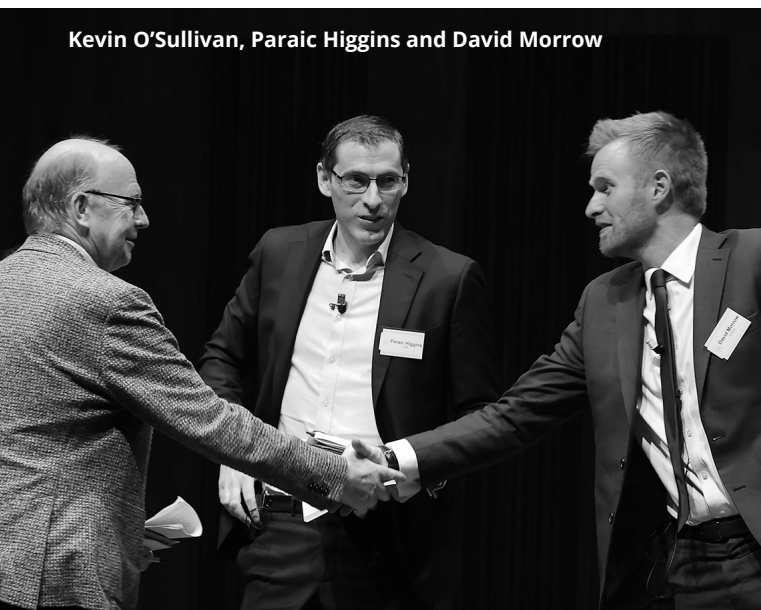
## What is going to help delivery of security of supply in a more orderly manner?

### John Reilly

Head of Renewable Energy, Bord na Móna

John commented that while the energy transition is well under way, this is not reflected in regulations. He discussed that while, in his opinion, the structure of the Capacity Market is fine, the delivery time and penalties need review. He further outlined that the island of Ireland's small isolated market is seeing capacity challenges way ahead of the rest of Europe. He stated that asset classes are being asked to do very different things than what was expected 10 years ago highlighting the importance of forward planning and consideration as to what the needs of the electricity system will be post-2030.

Kevin O’Sullivan, Paraic Higgins and David Morrow



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### Looking to Net Zero targets in the electricity sector, what market reform will have to happen to deliver low carbon security of supply in the future?

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#### Paraic Higgins

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Regulation Manager, ESB

Paraic broadly highlighted that there cannot only be net zero assets and conventional assets, a combination of both along with adequate system services is needed for security of supply in the future. He emphasized that the markets need to be flexible, and that it’s not just about giving an investment signal, but also about the behaviour of assets once they’re in the market.

Paraic discussed the transition that is currently taking place away from the DS3 arrangements which were, in his opinion, very successful. He noted that future market arrangements need to take stock of what worked well before reforming.

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### Will more European-wide interconnection solve all our problems?

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#### David Morrow

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Senior Policy Analyst, Energia

Building on Stacy’s comments on interconnectors, David acknowledged that while they have a role to play in Ireland, he explained that it is important that we avoid simplistic assumptions that suggest that interconnectors will always flow to Ireland’s benefit and reiterated Stacy’s comment on rigorous modelling.

Developing another point, David outlined that interconnectors should be displacing fossil generation not domestic renewables, as is being experienced both in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Allowing this to continue and grow undermines the investment case for building renewables on the island of Ireland.

Paraic Higgins



# Closing Remarks

## Dara Lynott


CEO, Electricity Association of Ireland

Dara closed the conference by summarising the key aspects of each of the panels and thanking the panellists. He commended the discussion on enterprise, industry, and innovation acknowledging that electrification and digitalisation are at the heart of growth.


He referred to the views expressed that cost has moved to the top of the list of priorities, while climate has moved down. However,, Dara noted that the sector will be crucial in delivering Ireland’s sectoral emissions targets.

Paying particular attention to the CEO panel, Dara pointed to the main features of the panellists’ Christmas Lists including a biomethane strategy, transformation of heating and clear policy direction.

In closing, he commented on the focus of the conference being electrification, the delivery of investment frameworks for the future energy system and decarbonisation. He highlighted that all stakeholders have a role to play in our zero e-mission future and now is the time to deliver it.

Markets that support customer preference and sustain investment



Electrification of the heating and transport sector



Support the deployment of new low-carbon technology in a secure and resilient system



A cost-effective transition to a decarbonised electricity sector by 2050

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