

Offshore Wind Update: CRU Decision Paper on Offshore Grid Connection Assessment – Phase 1 Projects



On 18 February 2022, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (“**CRU**”) published a Decision paper (found [here](#)) outlining the next stage of processing for Phase 1 offshore grid connection applications. Specifically, the CRU has decided that EirGrid will develop and issue a Grid Connection Assessment (“**GCA**”) to eligible Phase 1 applicants. This publication is the first decision by CRU concerning a new regulatory framework for the offshore electricity transmission system. It relates to a generation connection policy that concerns the first phase of offshore generation projects only.

The Decision also outlines the criteria required to progress the GCA, the issuance of which will enable a Phase 1 applicant to finalise a Marine Area Consent (MAC) with the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (“**DECC**”) and to seek to participate in the Offshore RESS 1 auction (scheduled to open in Q4 2022). The GCA will detail the connection method and cost of connecting a Phase 1 project to the transmission system at its onshore connection point.

A GCA will be a necessary requirement for each Phase 1 project to qualify for a full grid connection offer from EirGrid.

The following is a summary of the GCA decision:

- **GCA timeline:** Offshore Phase 1 projects to confirm existing connection applications within 30 working days of the Decision. EirGrid aim to issue the GCAs within 90 working days of the application being deemed complete.
- **GCA application:** Projects will need to submit a single desired MEC (MW), equal to or lower than the upper range limit submitted by the applicants in 2020, after which point no increase to the MEC will be permitted. Projects can specify a preferred onshore connection node(s) and will provide other location information as required by EirGrid.
- **Connection point allocation:** Applicants are expected to agree onshore connection points with EirGrid in the application confirmation stage. If there is competition for onshore connection points between applicants after EirGrid’s review of the confirmed applications, the resolution will be reached by collaborative agreement between the parties. If no agreement is reached, the onshore connection points will be assigned based on the EirGrid ‘Offshore Node Assignment’ criteria.
- **GCA conditionality:** Once Phase 1 applications have been deemed complete by EirGrid, they will be eligible to receive a GCA. However, if a Phase 1 project’s MAC award is declined or terminated, then it will no longer be eligible to receive a GCA.
- **GCA validity period:** The GCA validity period, in the first instance, will be until 3 months after the Offshore RESS1 ‘Notice of Award’. The CRU will revisit the decision of validity period beyond that this time after the DECC decision on Phase 2 selection process, due later in 2022.
- **Qualification for full grid connection offer:** Phase 1 applicants holding a GCA will be eligible for a full grid connection offer with confirmation of an Offshore RESS1 Notice of Award. The CRU will revisit the decision on how to qualify for full grid offer beyond that described above after the DECC decision on Phase 2 selection process outlined above.

The CRU's connection policy for a full grid connection offer will be the subject to a separate CRU consultation which is expected to be published by the end Q1 2022.

For further information, please contact:



Stephen Barry
*Partner, Dispute
Resolution & Litigation*

T: +353 1 6644 284
StephenBarry@
eversheds-sutherland.ie



Mark Varian
*Partner, Head of
Construction & Projects*

T: +353 1 6644 341
MarkVarian@
eversheds-sutherland.ie



Phelim McGeady
*Associate, Energy &
Projects*

T: +353 1 6644 392
PhelimMcGeady@
eversheds-sutherland.ie



Michael Twomey
*Associate, Dispute
Resolution & Litigation*

T: +353 1 6644 352
MichaelTwomey@
eversheds-sutherland.ie



Chloe Prendergast
*Solicitor, Dispute
Resolution & Litigation*

T: +353 1 6441 490
ChloePrendergast@
eversheds-sutherland.ie

