

## Implementing RGI Declarations Memorandum of Understanding

### **Our objective: a successful implementation of the energy transition**

The overarching objective of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is to define the roles of project partners, provide a commitment to resourcing and indicate common lines of action in order to support the delivery of the project as detailed in the accompanying Concept Note.

This MoU provides the framework through which the project parties, EirGrid (Transmission System Operator) and Friends of the Earth, and the Renewables Grid Initiative, intend to jointly plan and collaborate in order to achieve this objective.

This MoU encompasses agreements for collaborative efforts that complement the work undertaken by the Renewables Grid Initiative. It takes account of the RGI Statutes, the “European Grid Declaration on Electricity Network Development and Nature Conservation”, the “European Grid Declaration on Transparency and Public Participation” as well as the RGI Strategic Objectives. The MoU aims to implement these common ambitions through a collaboration coordinated by RGI and to support the continuous and ecologically sound development of the grid infrastructure which is needed for a successful energy transition and to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

### **The role of Friends of the Earth**

The NGO signatory, Friends of the Earth, is an active environmental organisation which campaigns for climate justice and sustainability. In relation to climate and energy policy its objective is to promote a rapid and just transition to a community centred, zero-carbon energy system for Ireland. It is committed to joining forces with other organisations and networks, of diverse experiences and perspectives.

Friends of the Earth seeks to ensure that everyone, particularly marginalised and disadvantaged groups who might be affected by policy, is considered and included in the conversation. It strives to expand and diversify civic engagement by creating spaces for everybody to participate and be included in activism and political change.

Friends of the Earth brings its specific knowledge on sustainable development, community participation and social justice to inclusive dialogue regarding the implications of the energy transition and the role of necessary grid development projects.

By doing so, ‘better’ projects can be realised. ‘Better’ encompasses here aspects of climate action, nature protection, ecological soundness, and aspects of health, as well as more transparent and more participatory processes. It encompasses due consideration of arguments that support or contradict the necessity of grid infrastructure in support of the energy transition, while maintaining high standards of environmental protection.

Ultimately, the cooperation will be an important contribution in promoting climate-aligned, socially compatible, and ecologically sound design, increased legitimacy and increased societal and community acceptance of the necessary grid development projects.

All issues can be addressed that are inherently relevant to the NGO’s expertise and objectives (e.g., biodiversity protection, health aspects, effective public, community and stakeholder participation), in relation to grid infrastructure development and energy transition/climate action. Friends of the Earth will contribute to the increased accessibility, quality, and effectiveness of the energy transition through capacity building and assistance provided by EirGrid.

Friends of the Earth's contribution to the project will directly support their primary organisational goals. This MoU therefore explicitly does not limit Friends of the Earth in expressing critical opinions or in producing position statements regarding planning, implementation, or legal proceedings in relation to current or planned grid development projects of the TSO

### **The role of EirGrid**

EirGrid operates and develops the electricity transmission grid in Ireland. This includes interconnection with neighbouring grids and the wholesale electricity market. The grid brings power from generators to the ESB distribution network that supplies every home, farm and business in Ireland. The grid is also used to deliver power directly to businesses that use large amounts of electricity. EirGrid ensures electricity is always available – today, tomorrow and for decades to come.

Following a review of their approach to public engagement, EirGrid has produced a new Public Engagement Strategy for a Cleaner Energy Future.

New infrastructure projects often lead to robust and emotive debates. There can be significant delays when communities feel they aren't being heard. Communities expect more persuasive and compelling reasons for disruptive change. They also expect to have meaningful ways to participate in a decision-making process. In response, EirGrid is determined to better reflect and include the views of communities when planning new grid infrastructure. EirGrid believes that landowner and community support are key to the successful transition to clean forms of energy – and ultimately to support the fight against climate change.

EirGrid's aim is to develop a cohesive approach to Public Engagement that reflects and is framed by the energy transition – and by the urgent context of climate action. They do not expect to always be able to deliver the specific technical solution that the public want. Where they can't, they will ensure that they explain why. EirGrid always pursues an approach of continuous improvement in everything they do. They aim to build trust by clearly detailing their goals and limitations – and they then seek to reach an agreed response.

Recognising the value of creating a dialogue with the wider society, and in line with other partnerships and initiatives, EirGrid intends to engage a broad range of stakeholders in in-depth, meaningful discussions about the future and the role of the grid.

### **The role of the Renewables Grid Initiative**

RGI is a unique collaboration of NGOs and TSOs from across Europe engaging in an 'energy transition ecosystem-of-actors'. RGI promotes fair, transparent, sustainable grid development to enable the growth of renewables to achieve full decarbonisation in line with the Paris Agreement. As part of its strategy, RGI initiates innovative approaches to enable a sensitive grid development. This includes that RGI actively instigates and facilitates cooperation between TSOs and NGOs to jointly work on better processes at local, regional and national level.

The Renewables Grid Initiative will undertake a far-reaching role in the practical implementation of the MoU. RGI will liaise between partners and act as the facilitator and mediator between EirGrid and Friends of the Earth, thus ensuring a constructive and respectful exchange. RGI will also contribute to further detailing out the project concept throughout the project and take a lead on logistical and contractual aspects of the project. Given RGI's experience in leading similar projects in other national contexts (Germany and Italy), RGI will secure the exchange with colleagues from other projects where relevant, as well as itself acting as a general sparring partner for both parties. Furthermore, RGI will secure dissemination of project results with a European audience where appropriate. Independent of this, Friends of the Earth has the right to use and publish intermediate and final results at their own discretion.

**Amendments and duration of the Memorandum**

The project will continue for a minimum of three years. This shall support the development of expert capacity at the NGO to accompany this project efficiently and at a high-quality level. Amendments to the MoU can only be made by mutual agreement between all parties. The present MoU shall remain in force until September 2024 unless otherwise agreed by all parties.