

SEM Chart of the Week

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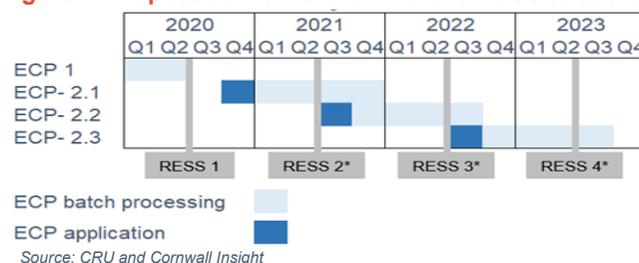
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Getting RESStless: ECP-2 proposed decision

The process of applying for grid connections in Ireland has changed under the ECP process, allowing policy makers to prioritise certain projects. The first stage, ECP-1 occurred in 2018 and now the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) have published the *Enduring Connection Policy Stage 2*, or ECP-2 proposed decision. This chart of the week will explore the paper’s proposed design of the ECP-2 process compared with ECP-1, based on updated policy objectives and feedback is sought from stakeholders.

It is proposed that ECP-2 will consist of one batch application window per year for three years which are named ECP-2.1 for 2020, ECP-2.2 for 2021 and ECP-2.3 for 2022. Each batch application would include 50 connection offers per year. The ECP application windows and processing periods would line up with the proposed Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) auctions as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Proposed timeline of ECP 2 and RESS auctions



Applications accepted under ECP-1 are being processed and will continue to be in preparation for RESS in June 2020. According to the government’s Climate Action Plan, RESS-2 will most likely occur in Q221, a year later than timelines published in the RESS high level design. Assuming the auctions will

also be set back by a year, the figure indicates the possible future RESS auction dates.

The focus of ECP-2 is to facilitate the connection of new onshore renewable projects and storage to the grid in line with climate goals. Therefore, under ECP-2.1, the 25 projects with the largest renewable generation in GWh/year will be prioritised. Storage offers are not included in this but would qualify for remaining offers based on the date of granted planning permission as would remaining generation projects not already prioritised. ECP-1 saw batch prioritisation determined by planning permission expiry date, which potentially incentivised shorter project planning duration.

To create a level playing field, all generation and storage technologies will be considered within ECP-2. Project implementation will be determined by CRU’s final decision on the outcome of the consultation. Community-led projects would be given up to 15 out of 30 offers per year as part of the non-batch process and would only require planning permission to be in place for a connection offer to be accepted.

The second proposal requiring feedback concerns projects contracted pre ECP-1. It is proposed that these projects will have a final chance to terminate connection agreements and release their full contracted maximum export capacity under the terms and conditions outlined in the [CER/16/28CER/16/2844](#).

Irish climate goals require a large uptake of renewable projects with up to 8GW of onshore wind and up to 1.5GW of solar. Clarifying the process around connection applications is welcome especially based on the likely RESS auction timelines.

