



A new report commissioned by ReThink pylons (March 2014) claims to offer an Alternative to EirGrid's Grid 25 project.

Conversion of Ireland's largest power station, Moneypoint in Co. Clare, from coal to biomass is a low cost alternative to Grid25 that would make it possible to meet Irish renewable energy targets for 2020 at a single stroke – while protecting Irish jobs and safeguarding the countryside from pylon blight, an expert report concludes.

The report, by consultants Dr Anthony White and Malcolm Brown of BW Energy, also makes clear that gradual conversion to biomass at Moneypoint, would enable Ireland to meet its renewable energy commitments cost effectively, without the massive Grid25 upgrade required by Ireland's current "all wind" policy.

The report, *Review of the Irish Government's Strategy for Compliance with the European Directive 2009/28*, is released today by ReThink Pylons, a volunteer organisation working to stimulate a rethink of Irish energy policy, including Grid25.

Key Findings:

- Gradual conversion from coal to biomass at Moneypoint, Ireland's largest power station would make it possible to meet 2020 targets at a single stroke.
- The market for biomass has been transformed in the last five years, making security of supply through long-term fixed price contracts a reality.
- Possibility of burning locally grown biomass promotes Irish job creation.
- Biomass conversion would protect the Irish landscape and jobs in the tourism, bloodstock and agriculture sectors by eliminating the need for the Grid25 upgrade and further development of onshore wind farms.
- At an estimated cost of €380 million, conversion of Moneypoint would enable Ireland to meet its renewable energy target at a tenth of the €3.8 billion cost of the government's current plan.
- Choosing the biomass conversion option will be cheaper for domestic consumers than relying on onshore wind. In terms of "green economics", moreover, the biomass conversion option can deliver carbon savings nearly double those associated with wind power for every € spent.

Biomass conversion, the report concludes, offers a practical, cost effective solution to Ireland's renewable energy requirements. "Biomass now represents a real alternative," said Malcolm Brown. "Using the recent successful conversion of the Drax power station in Yorkshire as a model for the adaptation of Moneypoint, could provide the answer for Ireland."

Drax is Western Europe's largest power station and was solely coal fired until 2010. Technological and market developments in biomass have meant Drax is now converting 1,980 MW of its plant to biomass generation following an effective co-firing transition.

Moneypoint, with 915 MW generation capacity, could do the same, the report concludes. Gradual conversion of Moneypoint from coal to biomass would bring an additional 25% of renewable energy onto the Irish power system. This, in addition to the 19.6% Ireland has on 2012 figures, would mean that the 40% target for electricity generation from renewable sources by 2020 would be achieved.

At an estimated cost of €380 million, conversion of Moneypoint could meet the renewables target at a tenth of the cost of the power transmission system upgrade necessary to accommodate additional wind. The proposed Grid25 network upgrade (involving hundreds of pylons carrying over a thousand kilometres of high voltage overhead line) would no longer be required as Moneypoint is already securely connected to the power system.

“The facts have changed in Ireland’s energy debate,” said Paddy Massey, spokesperson for ReThink Pylons. “Today’s report makes it clear that wind is not the only way and the envisaged pylon blight is not a necessity. Technology has moved on. This report is a positive contribution to the debate which demands proper investigation by the government.”

In light of this report, ReThink Pylons is calling again on the Irish Government to re-examine its energy policy and is asking for a fundamental rethink of Grid25, Grid Link and associated projects.

About ReThink Pylons

ReThink Pylons is a national organisation made up of volunteers who hope to stimulate a rethink of energy issues. www.rethinkpylons.org

About BW Energy

BW Energy is an international specialist energy consultancy providing strategic, financial, regulatory and policy advice in decarbonising energy markets. www.b-wenergy.com

Biographies

Malcolm Brown has over 27 years’ experience of the energy sector and low carbon economy as a financial analyst and strategy consultant. He was Head of UBS’s European Energy Research team and Head of European Investment Research at ABN Amro. Malcolm specializes in the impact of the low carbon economy on the energy sector and was a Director at Climate Change Capital. In 2010 he co-founded BW-Energy.

Dr Anthony White has over 35 years’ experience in international power markets and the low carbon economy as a financial analyst and industry strategist. He was National Grid’s Group Head of Strategy and Head of Citigroup’s European power team. More recently he was a founder of Climate Change Capital. In 2010 he co-founded BW-Energy.

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