



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

The report, by consultants Dr Anthony White and Malcolm Brown of BW Energy, concludes that co-firing of biomass with coal or complete conversion to biomass at Ireland's existing power plants would enable Ireland to meet its renewable energy commitments cost-effectively, and make the Grid25 upgrade unnecessary.

"There have been important technological advances in boiler design and a scaling up of the international biomass market in the years since Ireland made the costly decision to rely so heavily on wind power to meet its renewable targets," said Malcolm Brown "Biomass now represents a real alternative".

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:

- Recent developments in biomass technology mean biomass co-firing at Irish coal and peat power plants is now a real option for meeting Ireland's renewable targets.
- 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 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 or co-firing 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 windfarms.
- 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.
- Choice of the Biomass conversion option will lower additional costs to domestic customers. In terms of "green economics", moreover, the Biomass conversion option presents an opportunity for carbon savings nearly double those associated with wind power.

Under a 2009 EU Directive, Ireland is obliged to increase its share of gross final energy consumption produced from renewable sources to meet a 16% target by 2020. Current Irish Government policy envisions achieving that target in the electricity sector by doubling onshore wind power.

In a previous report, BW Energy demonstrated that connecting such a large proportion of wind power to a relatively small, islanded network could lead to the risk of uncontrollable fluctuation in power flows. Producing power from renewable biomass will not require a major transmission system upgrade.

It is that technical necessity which is behind Grid 25, which would crisscross the country with hundreds of pylons carrying over a thousand kilometers of high-voltage overhead line.

Conversion of Ireland's existing power stations from coal and peat to biomass (wood pellets) would require no such reinforcement of the transmission network.

Anti- pylon activists across Ireland welcomed today's report, citing both its economic common sense and "green" fundamentals. In challenging Ireland's current energy policy, Paddy Massey of ReThink Pylons aptly quoted the famous economist John Maynard Keynes, 'When the facts change, I change my opinion. What do you do sir?'

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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