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1. An [article](#) in the Irish Independent 10 August 2014 criticises “the state’s ‘Alice in Wonderland’ policies” on energy. Gas is imported to generate electricity in Ireland. As international wholesale gas prices fall, so does the wholesale electricity price, and the Irish regulator then has to compensate certain electricity generators, including wind, peat and gas power. That is, all three of low, high and medium carbon emissions are subsidised. The consumer picks up the tab in additional PSO (public service obligation) charges.

2. The article complains of over-investment in the Irish electricity system which has more than adequate capacity, especially since demand peaked in 2007 and fell with the economic crisis. “*The main component in the price the customer pays for electricity is the cost of remunerating the enormous amounts of capital tied up in the generation, transmission and distribution of power. The fuel used in power generation in Ireland accounts for only a fifth to a quarter of the total. Uncontrolled capital spending is causing sky-high electricity prices.*”

3. The website <http://www.gridwatch.templar.co.uk/> shows UK National Grid Status with a set of dials for the contributions from different types of generation. Pretty!

4. John Polley reports [an item in Professional Engineering](#) of September 2014. ABB has launched the world’s most powerful underground / undersea [HVDC cable](#), at 525 kV with capacity about 2,600 MW and range to 1,500 km.

5. An article offering a mathematical modelling perspective, emphasising the modelling uncertainties in global warming orthodoxy, appears in the [Scientific Alliance](#) newsletter of 12-09-2014. Scientific Alliance has been attacked by Bob May of the Royal Society and by Wikipedia, but these attacks seem incongruous with the actual newsletters as far as climate change is concerned. On its merits, the article seems moderate and balanced.

6. The Berlin-based EU [Renewables Grid Initiative](#) (RGI), launched in 2009, (see [news354](#)) drives a powerful PR operation to promote more electricity grid to support renewable energy. It gives an impression of being all about publicity and promotion, rather than real science or technology. However it does include a [database](#) listing current underground cable projects in Europe, giving voltage and length and links to further information.

7. The RGI has an 11-page [EU Grid Declaration](#) which includes: “*Visual amenity (landscape) and human health issues are important concerns, but are beyond the scope of this Declaration.*” It claims “*It aims to strengthen a climate of trust and cooperation, not only between the Parties engaged but also within a wider group of stakeholders and the public, in order to foster public support for grid expansion for renewables integration in line with biodiversity conservation objectives.*” But it is not clear what this means – selling the idea and winning a majority and suppressing objectors, or really engaging and responding to objectors. Time will tell.

8. A 2012 [extension](#) to the EU Grid Declaration is titled “*On Transparency and Public Participation*”. It calls for “*early and continuous involvement*” of stakeholders and local knowledge, a “culture of dialogue and debate” and for considering “*independent facilitation*”. Good principles, fine words, and again time will tell. The underlying theme still seems to be about selling and still rejects public concerns about visual amenity and human health, the two main drivers of objections! If big NGOs are recruited early to support the power companies’ proposals, this may tend to crush small objectors and their landscape and health concerns.

9. Luther Gerlach writes: In the USA we have Re-Amp, an organization funded by foundations working with diverse “stakeholders” to get electricity from “renewables” into use. It promotes expansion of grids to accomplish this, overcoming intermittency and wide dispersal features of wind. Foundations supporting it are the ones that support environmental groups, and environmental groups mainline type are main participants, along with wind producers. Re Amp has been criticized by transmission line opposition as a sham, a front, a green washer, etc. But I find no grass roots response to RGI, no critique of it.

10. It’s almost a year since National Grid halted its Bramford-Twinstead proposal, as the [Stour Valley Underground](#) website explains. But it is just in abeyance, perhaps delayed for 5 years. Meanwhile pressure for transmission from North Sea windfarms grows, and the mooted line running eastwards across East Anglia from Lowestoft looms larger.

11. National Grid’s Electricity Ten Year Statement (ETYS) used to seem, even in its 7-year form, more comprehensive in listing future projects. Now ETYS does not give easy access to future projects and seems to leave out the less certain possibilities. For example while Lowestoft is listed in ETYS as a 400 kV substation (LOWE) it does not feature in either the current grid or future line proposals, so seems like a phantom unconnected to the grid. NG’s [page for projects](#) tells more. It includes the 7.2 GW [East Anglia Offshore Windfarm \(EAOW\) Connection](#) Project and mentions Lowestoft as a possibility “no earlier than 2023”, along with Bacton a little later, while the first 3.6 GW are due to be connected at Bramford between 2018 and 2022.

12. Under “latest update” (at 17-09-2014) NG’s EAOW page says: “*Stakeholders will have the opportunity to comment on strategic options, and the public will have the opportunity to comment on routes and then more detailed proposals through the various stages of our consultations.*” This tends to confirm our long-held concern that the public are being kept out of strategic consultation and only allowed to comment on (usually a very restricted choice of) routes once the strategy has been decided privately between industry and government.

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