



An Coimisiún  
um Rialáil Fóntais

Commission for  
Regulation of Utilities

# Strategic Plan 2022-24

*Regulating energy  
and water for a  
changing climate*



# Introduction

On behalf of the CRU team, the Commissioners are delighted to present the Commission for Regulation of Utilities' Strategic Plan for the period 2022 to 2024. This Strategic Plan is transformative and ensures that an expanded CRU team will contribute fully to delivering national and global policy imperatives such as urgently addressing climate change, ensuring energy and water security and protecting the interests of all customers. This Plan is the result of an extensive internal and external consultation process and we thank our team and key stakeholders for their constructive contribution.



A core area of our work for the next three years is, with our stakeholders, delivering a programme of actions to secure the long term enduring capacity in our energy sectors that we need in order to reach our 2030 targets while continuing to meet the demands of our growing and de-carbonising economy. New legislation and policy will significantly expand the role and remit of the CRU in this period, as we deploy the tools of economic and safety regulation to deliver positive change for customers and society.

Our Strategic Plan also sets out our priorities for enabling and protecting energy and water customers, particularly vulnerable customers. Ensuring that active customers and communities play an increasing role in climate action and equity in the transition will be core areas of focus during the term of this strategic plan. Protection of the public is also a key priority for the CRU with the designation of safety supervisory bodies being retendered during the course of this plan and potential for our safety remit to be expanded in line with new developments in hydrogen and offshore wind.

The CRU will work with our stakeholders to ensure that Irish Water efficiently delivers its infrastructure programme yielding positive outcomes for consumers in line with additional funding provided through the revenue control process.

To implement the Strategic Plan, the CRU has prepared a resourcing plan which details the budget and increase in staffing required. The step change in capacity and capability reflects the expansion of the CRU's remit arising from legislation and policy developments. Our workplace has also changed dramatically in response to COVID-19 and we have adapted and will continue to do so, to facilitate more flexible ways of working while supporting development and potential of our staff.

We wish to thank all of our staff and stakeholders who gave their time, energy and insights to this Plan, supporting the CRU in delivering on our vision for safe, secure and sustainable supplies of energy and water, for the benefit of customers now and in the future.

**Aoife MacEvilly**  
Chairperson

# About the CRU

The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) is Ireland's independent energy and water regulator. The work of the CRU impacts every Irish home and business ensuring safe, secure and sustainable energy and water supplies for the benefit of all customers.

We operate within a policy and statutory framework set by Government and have responsibility for the economic regulation of energy and water, energy safety and customer protection.



## Economic Regulation of Energy and Water

Regulation of energy and water underpins Irish economic competitiveness, investment and growth, while also contributing to our international obligations to address climate change.

The CRU's role in energy is to maintain security of supply, ensure efficient network delivery and promote competition and innovation in the generation and supply of electricity and supply of natural gas. As part of this role, the CRU jointly regulates the all-island wholesale Single Electricity Market with its counterpart in Northern Ireland, the Utility Regulator.

As economic regulator for public water and wastewater services, the CRU sets targets and monitors the performance of Irish Water in delivering services and investment in infrastructure in a cost-efficient manner.



## Protecting Energy and Water Customers

The CRU works to protect energy and water customers, especially the vulnerable. Setting quality of service standards in energy and water while enabling competition and innovation, ensures customers are treated fairly and are at the heart of the transition to a low carbon future.

We provide customers with information about their rights and also offer a dispute resolution service to deal with issues that customers have not been able to resolve with their energy company or Irish Water. The CRU also promotes customer protection and engagement through targeted communications campaigns which inform customers on how to get the best value and service from utility companies and participate actively in decarbonisation and water conservation.



## Energy Safety Regulation

The CRU has a key role in protecting public safety and the prevention of major accidents in Ireland's energy sector. This includes safety regulation of:

- gas (networks, supply, storage, use and liquefied petroleum gas distribution);
- petroleum (upstream (onshore and offshore) exploration and production of hydrocarbons);
- and gas installers and electrical contractors.

Our public safety remit also includes ensuring electrical contractors and gas installers operate to relevant national standards to protect life and property as well as promoting customer awareness of safety.



## OUR MISSION:

Protecting the public interest in  
Water, Energy and Energy Safety.



## OUR VISION:

Safe, secure and sustainable supplies of energy and water,  
for the benefit of customers now and in the future.

## OUR VALUES:



### INTEGRITY

Trust is vital, so we act with integrity at all times and take balanced, evidence-based decisions that are fair and consistent.



### PROFESSIONALISM

We are professional in everything we do. We work as a team and always strive to develop our expertise. We are pragmatic and open to alternative processes.



### OPENNESS

We are committed to co-operation. We clearly explain who we are and what we do. Our processes are open, thorough and consider views from all stakeholders. We explain our decisions in clear language.



### ACCOUNTABILITY

We are accountable for our decisions and for the way we spend our resources. We are independent and open to scrutiny.

# Strategic Priorities

Our Mission, Vision and Values determine the way we work and what we prioritise. These are the four strategic priorities for the next three years which will ensure we focus on delivering in the public interest.



# 1

## Ensure security of supply

### OBJECTIVES

- 1 Ensure sustainable and secure energy networks and supplies
- 2 Provide effective regulation that supports competitive and efficient energy markets.

- 3 Deliver secure, high-quality water and waste water services.

### OUTCOMES

- The lights stay on and gas continues to flow.
  - Security of Electricity Supply Programme of Actions implemented.
  - Delivery of major electricity networks infrastructure programmes (Price Review 5).
  - Significant new gas-fired generation capacity procured and delivered or under construction.
  - Increased contribution from demand side units and battery storage.
  - New electricity interconnection and biogas entry points under way.
  - Evolution of competitive market design for energy, capacity and system services to support long term security and meet 2030 targets.
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- Effective performance and delivery by Irish Water in meeting capacity, improving water quality and waste water compliance.
  - Regular reporting on Irish Water's delivery, performance and outcomes in place.
  - Measurable improvement in Irish Water leakage reduction.
  - New national charging regimes for trade effluent (non-domestic) and public group water schemes in place.
  - A consolidated data reporting framework between Irish Water and the CRU to facilitate an improved and efficient data exchange for Revenue Control 4 and beyond.
  - Completed review of the economic regulatory framework for Irish Water to support next revenue control.
  - Programme of review for Irish Water's major projects under Public Spending Code under way and completion of the review of the Water Supply Project.



# 2 Drive a Low Carbon Future



## OBJECTIVES

**1 Design and implement regulatory frameworks that deliver transformational change.**

## OUTCOMES

- Secure sustainable energy system that meets 2030 targets.
- Agile investment, reporting and incentive frameworks that demonstrate efficient and innovative delivery of electricity network, infrastructure and services.
- Price control decision for Gas Networks Ireland that supports security of supply and decarbonisation.
- New safety and economic regulatory frameworks for biogas and hydrogen under development.
- Proposed new approach to electricity network tariff structures that supports customers and decarbonisation.

**2 Enable high levels of renewable integration through market design and development.**

- Progress towards renewable electricity target of up to 80%.
- CRU actions under Climate Action Plan 2021 progressed or complete.
- Evolution of electricity connection policy, including new Firm Access Policy and framework for off-shore wind connections.
- New off-shore renewable electricity regulation team established.
- Regulatory framework for new off-shore grid significantly advanced.
- New arrangements for competitive procurement of system services in place.
- Support provided for Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auctions.

**3 Ensure markets enable participation in the transition by all customers.**

- Customers are better informed and empowered with an increasing proportion engaging and benefitting from the transition to a low carbon future.
- New demand side strategy to support flexible demand targets in place.
- Electricity smart meter roll-out completed by 2024.
- Increased customer uptake of smart tariffs and services.
- Microgeneration interim and enduring arrangements in place by 2022 and 2024, respectively.
- Ongoing market monitoring and reporting with enhanced customer and market insights.

# 3 Empower and protect customers

## OBJECTIVES

- 1 Engage and protect customers ensuring their voice is heard and reflected in the work of the CRU.
- 2 Strengthen communications to improve awareness of customer rights, safety, and the sectors we regulate.
- 3 Implement compliance frameworks and develop incentives for the benefit of customers and safety of the general public from energy safety risks.
- 4 Provide trusted advice to policy makers and stakeholders and advocate for necessary policy changes.

## OUTCOMES

- ▶ Increased integration of the customer voice in CRU decision making as evidenced in our publications and decisions.
  - ▶ Design of new regulatory frameworks to facilitate active customers, citizen/renewable energy communities and aggregators well-advanced.
  - ▶ Implementation of new water conservation strategy which includes the implementation of Irish Water Excess Usage charges.
  - ▶ Updated and enhanced CRU customer dispute resolution service in line with sectoral developments and new legislation.
  - ▶ Conducted customer surveys and market research to gather feedback from energy and water customers to inform policy.
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- ▶ Improved awareness and understanding by stakeholders and customers of rights, protections and the role and work of the CRU.
  - ▶ Delivery of annual communications campaigns to protect customers and promote engagement with smart services.
  - ▶ Enhanced promotion of gas and electricity safety awareness.
  - ▶ Improved accessibility standards for CRU website, publications and social media.
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- ▶ Improved performance and compliance levels of regulated entities and increased protection of the general public from energy safety risks.
  - ▶ The application of standards of performance for the purposes of administrative sanctions.
  - ▶ Successful completion of safety supervisory body designation project.
  - ▶ Annual audit and inspection programmes completed with enforcement actions closed out.
  - ▶ Safety Incident Investigations and other compliance investigations conducted as required and 'where appropriate' on a risk based approach.
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- ▶ Recognition of the CRU as providing a consistent and stable regulatory regime and is seen as an effective player in the delivery of outcomes in the public interest.
  - ▶ Enhanced engagement by CRU teams in national, EU and other international fora to support consumers and the public interest.



# 4 Enable our people and organisational capacity



## OBJECTIVES

- 1 Deploy organisation design and workforce planning frameworks to enable a flexible and agile CRU resource model.
- 2 Empower our people with the knowledge, skills and supports to work strategically, collaboratively and achieve personal and professional development.
- 3 Enable our staff with best-in-class digital technologies to meet expectations of a more digitally skilled public and stakeholder.
- 4 Implement best practice Governance and processes to support the work of the CRU.

## OUTCOMES

- The CRU has an appropriate level of independence and control over its resourcing model, in line with recommendations of OECD Report 2018, to ensure it supports delivery of the Strategic Plan and the national policy goals underpinning it.
- CRU Organisation design supports successful delivery on priorities.
- Employee expertise, knowledge retention and engagement are increased, supporting career development and staff wellbeing.
- Delivery of learning and development plan that enhances expertise and competencies of our staff.
- Development and implementation of new HR strategy.
- All CRU services are available online and staff are proficient using IT systems and supports to work efficiently and effectively.
- Implementation of ICT strategy (2021-2023) to provide systems, infrastructure, and platforms that are reliable, secure and aligned to business needs.
- Transformation of key business processes to enable enhanced service for customers/stakeholders including customer care, licensing and consultations.
- Application of robust processes and procedures and adherence to high standards of governance in the running of the CRU.
- Enhanced approaches to emergency preparedness and business continuity building on experience and taking account of major cybersecurity incidents.
- Build legal capacity to ensure robustness of decisions and processes.

## Consultation to inform this Strategy

The CRU Strategic Plan 2022-24 has been developed in consultation with our stakeholders including the utilities we regulate, energy suppliers, licensees, representative organisations, consumer groups, other public sector bodies, Government Departments and our own staff.

We would like to thank all who took the time and effort to make submissions which have been taken into account in the preparation of this Plan.

## Performance and Evaluation

The CRU's Strategic Plan 2022-2024 will be accompanied by an implementation plan which sets out actions to achieve priorities and objectives within defined timelines. The plan will form part of the CRU's Work Plan which is submitted to the Departments of Environment, Climate and Communications and Housing, Local Government and Heritage annually.

Performance will be monitored by the CRU on an ongoing basis with details on progress published in each year's Annual Report.





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