Irish Rural Link

PRESS RELEASE

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RURAL HOUSEHOLDS ARE PAYING PEAK PRICES FOR ELECTRICITY THE GRID IS THROWING AWAY

Irish Rural Link wants families to get first refusal on the wind power they have already paid for, a text to tell them when it is cheap, and a free plug-in battery in every home instead of the next electricity credit

Irish Rural Link is going to the Ploughing with something different: instead of another credit gone by the next bill, a plug-in battery for every home, first refusal on the wind power households already pay for, and a text when it is cheap.

It has been a bad week for bills. SSE Airtricity, Bord Gáis Energy and Energia all announced October increases, and every supplier in the market has put prices up this year. In the first six months of the year, 13.2% of Ireland's available wind power was switched off because the grid could not take it, enough to run 667,000 homes. Households paid for that wind three times over. They underwrote the contracts that built it, they pay for the wires, and they pay a levy on every kWh they use for a grid that cannot use the power it has, mostly to gas plants kept running so the wind can be switched off. That levy is €790 million this year, about €84 a home, and €35 million of it is paid to wind and solar farms for electricity that was thrown away.

Irish Rural Link is asking the Government and the regulator for a right of first refusal. When there is more wind than the country can use and the wholesale price drops below zero, households should get that electricity for no more than 5 cent a kWh, automatically through the smart meter, with a text the evening before telling them when. If suppliers can text people about arrears, they can text them when electricity is cheap.

And for Budget 2027, one idea in place of another credit. In May, Lidl started selling a 2.24kWh home battery in Germany for €299. It is about the size of a microwave and sits beside the fridge. Plug the fridge into it, plug it into the wall, set the clock, and the fridge runs on night-rate power for good. That is worth about €100 a year on a typical plan and up to €250 on a night-rate window, so it pays for itself in about three years and keeps going for fifteen. In a storm it keeps the fridge, lights, router and phones going for up to twelve hours. Two million of them cost about €600 million once, double Ireland's storage, and at 500 watts each across the four peak hours take a gigawatt off the peak, more than any power station in the country.

Ireland cannot keep paying for energy the way it does now: credits that vanish into the next bill, gas plants paid to keep running so the wind can be switched off, and imported gas that sets the price of every kWh. The State spent €755 million on fuel supports this spring and over €3 billion on credits since 2022, and none of it is left. The Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund has up to €630 million a year set aside for projects that cut fossil fuel use. Irish Rural Link is asking for one year of it, and for the 800 watt plug-in rule due this month, so the batteries are legal on day one.

Briain Smyth, Chief Executive of Irish Rural Link, said:

> *"Everybody in rural Ireland has driven past a wind farm on the windiest day of the year and seen the blades standing still. They are paying for that three times over and never getting a kWh of it. Give them first refusal on what they already own, and text them when it is going cheap. The energy transition is an asset households have already paid for, and it is time they received the dividend."*
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> *"The war in the Gulf and the price of gas are outside our control. What is inside our control is how we use the grid we have already paid for. We have the smart meters. Now we need the smart grid to make them work for Ireland. We can't keep spending money on energy credits, on paying gas plants to run so we can switch the wind off, and on imported gas. A €200 credit is gone in one bill. A €300 battery saves €100 to €250 a year for fifteen years, keeps the fridge running in a storm, and two million of them become part of the grid. We have spent billions on the symptoms. The cure is on a supermarket shelf for €299. Don't give the household another temporary credit. Give it the thing that makes the electricity cheaper."*

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Irish Rural Link is the national network representing the interests of rural communities in Ireland, with a membership of more than 600 rural community organisations. It is headquartered at Moate Business Park, Clara Road, Moate, Co. Westmeath. Briain Smyth is available for interview at the National Ploughing Championships, Screggan, Tullamore, Co. Offaly, on Tuesday 15 September 2026.

Irish Rural Link has a record of campaigns that changed national policy. It was among the most persistent voices for the National Broadband Plan through the years when the plan was in doubt, and when the rollout stalled in 2021 it called publicly for the Minister to account for it. More than 500,000 rural homes, farms and businesses can now order fibre, over 183,000 are connected, and the main build is due to finish this year, with Offaly, Laois, Leitrim, Sligo, Monaghan and Kildare among the counties completing this month. It campaigned for a legal right to cash as bank branches and post offices closed across rural towns, engaging with the Department of Finance and the Central Bank throughout. The Access to Cash Act, passed by the Oireachtas in May 2025 and in force since late 2025, now obliges the banks to keep an ATM or cash service within 10km of the vast majority of homes and businesses, sets a minimum number of machines per head of population, and gives the Central Bank the power to order one installed within eight weeks where a community is left without.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"Broadband and cash were the same argument as this one. Rural people pay for the national infrastructure like everyone else, and both times we had to fight to get the benefit delivered to their door. This is the third time. The electricity is being generated over their heads and they are the last people offered it."*

1. THREE CHARGES AND NO ELECTRICITY

Households pay for Ireland's renewable electricity three times over.

First, they underwrite it. Wind and solar farms are built on long-term price guarantees that electricity customers stand behind. Whether the guarantee is paying out or paying back in a given year, the customer carries the risk.

Second, they pay for the wires. Network charges on the bill go up by about €41.25 a year for a typical home from 1 October.

Third, they pay for a grid that cannot use the power it has. When the wind is up and the system cannot take it, wind farms are switched off, gas plants are kept running to hold the system steady, and both are paid for it. All of it comes out of a levy on every kWh of electricity sold, called the Network Imperfections Charge. It was set at €790 million for the current year, close to 2 cent on every kWh, or about €84 a year for a typical home before VAT. It is up by more than a third in a year.

Most of that money goes to conventional plant run outside the market. Wind and solar farms with firm connections are paid for constraints only. In the latest 12-month period published by the grid operators, May 2024 to April 2025, they received €34.92 million in constraint payments, and the TSOs used those actual payments as the basis for the following year's constrained-wind allowance. That is €35 million a year, on the bill, for electricity that was never made. Wind and solar are not currently paid for curtailment at all, pending a court case on EU compensation rules.

That third charge buys the household nothing. It pays for power to be thrown away. And it is levied at the same rate at six o'clock on a still January evening, when the grid is straining, as at three in the morning in a gale, when the grid has more power than it knows what to do with. The kWh that would help the system and the kWh that hurts it carry the same charge.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"We pay to build the wind farm, we pay for the wires to carry the power, and then we pay a gas plant to run so the wind farm can be switched off. If a plumber charged you to fit a tap, charged you for the pipe,*

> *and then charged you a third time to keep the old tap running so the new one could be turned off, you would have him out the door. That is our electricity bill."*

2. FIRST REFUSAL FOR THE PEOPLE WHO PAID FOR IT

Before a wind farm is switched off, its power should be offered to the households who paid for it, at a price that reflects the fact that the only alternative is to waste it.

In practice that means a Domestic Negative Price Tariff. When the wholesale price of electricity drops below zero, which is what happens when there is more wind than the country can use, households should pay nothing for the electricity itself and nothing in network charges on the kWh they use for that half hour. The supplier could charge no more than 5 cent a kWh to cover billing and administration. The same should apply whenever wind or solar is being switched off for want of demand.

This is not a subsidy and it does not cost the Exchequer anything. The money is already being collected from customers. At the moment it pays generators to produce nothing. Under this proposal it would go instead towards letting households use the power, which is the one outcome where nobody has to be compensated at all.

It also switches itself off. As households use up the surplus, the surplus shrinks, the price comes back above zero and normal charges resume.

The grid operators say as much themselves. Their own forecast for this year states that higher demand reduces these costs, because the gas units that must run for system security clear in the market instead of being paid to run outside it.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"There is a wind farm above the town turning off because nobody will take the power, and a house below it with the immersion off because the electricity is too dear. They are a mile apart. All we are asking is that somebody introduce them."*

3. THE SURPLUS ARRIVES WHEN THE BILL ARRIVES

Ireland's surplus is wind, and the wind blows hardest in winter. The times when the country has more electricity than it can use fall in the same months when households are spending most on heat, when the fuel allowance is being paid and when arrears build up.

Cheap power in July is of little use to anyone. This delivers on a wet, windy night in January, to a house with storage heaters, an immersion, a heat pump or a car in the drive.

Off-peak used to mean one thing: night. The network charge still works that way, at 0.8 cent a kWh between 11pm and 8am and around 6.2 cent for the rest of the day, whatever the weather is doing. But the surplus now arrives whenever the wind is up, at three in the morning and at three on a windy Sunday afternoon. Off-peak is set by the weather as much as by the clock, and the bill only knows about the clock.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"Off-peak used to be the middle of the night, full stop. Now it is the middle of the night and any hour the wind is blowing hard. The grid knows that to the half hour. The bill still runs on a 1970s clock, so a family is charged the daytime rate for using power at two o'clock on a windy Sunday when the system is begging somebody to use it. We put a smart meter on every wall in the country and then used it to tell the time.*
> *"Everyone pictures cheap wind power as a summer thing. It is not. It blows hardest in January, the same month the fuel allowance goes out and the arrears letters go in. The only month the country has too much electricity is the month people can least afford to buy it. You could not design it worse if you tried. And the people who gain most are not the ones with a battery in the garage and an app on the phone. It is the family in the draughty house with the storage heaters and the immersion, which is every second house in rural Ireland."*

4. RURAL HOUSEHOLDS START FURTHER BACK

Rural households already pay more just to be connected. The fixed network charge set by the regulator is €125.49 a year for a rural home and €86.04 for an urban one, a difference of nearly €40 before VAT, for the same electricity.

Rural homes are more likely to be off the gas grid, to depend on the car, and to rely on electricity, oil and solid fuel for heat. When prices rise they have fewer ways out.

They are also the homes best able to help. There is room to charge a car off the road, room for solar panels and a battery, and a hot water tank or a heat pump that can take surplus power when it is going. Most of the flexibility the grid is looking for is sitting in rural Ireland, and nothing in the way electricity is charged rewards it.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"A rural family pays €40 a year more than a family in town just to be plugged in. Same electricity, same wire, past the same wind farm they can see from the kitchen window. And then people wonder why rural Ireland thinks the system was not built with them in mind."*

5. A TEXT MESSAGE, NOT AN APP

Tomorrow's wholesale prices for every half hour are published the evening before. Suppliers have them. Suppliers also have every customer's mobile number, and they already use it to send texts about bills, payment reminders and arrears. The system for telling people when they owe money is built. It can just as easily tell them when electricity is cheap.

> *"Electricity will cost no more than 5c a kWh tonight from 1am to 6am. Put on the immersion and the washing machine, and charge the car if you can."*

Irish Rural Link wants these alerts to be a requirement on every supplier, free to the customer, and sent to everyone unless they opt out.

An app is not good enough. Large parts of rural Ireland still have poor mobile data and no high speed broadband, and many older people do not use a smartphone. An app would hand the benefit to the people who need it least and shut out the people who need it most. A text works on every phone ever sold, and it works where the signal is weak.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"If they can text us to tell us when we are in arrears, they can text us to tell us when electricity is cheap. A text message costs nothing. It reaches the pensioner in Leitrim the same as it reaches the software engineer in Dublin. If the answer to this is an app, we have already failed."*

6. WHAT IRISH RURAL LINK IS ASKING FOR

Irish Rural Link is asking the Government and the energy regulator, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities, to take this up in the Energy Affordability Action Plan and to set up a working group with EirGrid, ESB Networks and the suppliers to deliver:

1. A right of first refusal for households on renewable electricity that would otherwise be switched off.
2. A Domestic Negative Price Tariff, applied automatically through the smart meter, with no charge for the electricity, no network charge on the kWh used, and a supplier charge capped at 5 cent a kWh.
3. Free text alerts to every household, unless they opt out, telling them when the cheap window falls.
4. Published figures from the regulator on how much extra electricity households use in those windows, how much wind is saved from being switched off, how much the compensation bill falls, and what it does to household bills, with those savings fed back into future charges.
5. The power for EirGrid and ESB Networks to switch the incentive off in any area where extra demand would overload the local network.

6. A free plug-in battery for every home, funded from the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund, with the 800 watt plug-in rule in place before the first one is delivered.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"None of this needs a new power station, a new law or a new levy. It needs the regulator to let people buy electricity when it is being thrown away, and a text message to tell them it is happening. We have built a system where that counts as a radical proposal."*

7. A BATTERY IN EVERY HOME, NOT ANOTHER CREDIT

Battery prices have collapsed. In May, Lidl started selling a 2.24kWh lithium iron phosphate home battery in Germany for €299, with 800 watts of output. It is supermarket hardware now, not specialist kit. For Ireland, put the inverter and the controls in the box, plug it into the wall and let it do one job: buy electricity when it is cheap and use it when it is dear. No app, no trading, and nobody sitting up at two in the morning watching the electricity market.

WHAT YOU DO

The box is about the size of a microwave. It goes wherever the fridge lead reaches: on the worktop beside the fridge, on top of it, in the press next to it, or on the floor alongside. It has two sockets on top, one marked fridge and one marked emergency power. Plug the fridge into the fridge socket. Plug the box into the wall socket the fridge was using. Set the clock, and set the charging zone, which is the night window the household has been given so that the country's boxes fill in turns rather than all at once. The clock does two things: it fills the box in its zone at night, and it sets the box to put out 500 watts through each of the four peak hours, seven to nine in the morning and five to seven in the evening. That is the entire installation.

From then on the fridge runs off the box and the box fills itself in its window every night. The emergency socket is live all the time and is where the phone chargers, a lamp and the router go when the power is out. No electrician, no form, no app, no wiring, nothing to learn and nothing to remember. If the box is ever empty the fridge draws from the wall as it always did, so the fridge is never off.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"It is the size of a microwave and it goes where a microwave goes. Fridge into the box, box into the wall, set the clock. My mother could do it, and she will not have to, because the card in the box has a picture. That is the whole scheme, and anyone who tells you it is complicated is selling something."*

IT SAVES MONEY FROM THE FIRST DAY

Every house has a load that never really stops. The fridge and freezer, the router, the heating controls, the television on standby, the lights, the chargers, the pumps. Around 200 watts, all day and all night, which comes to nearly 5kWh of electricity a day. Most of it is bought at the day rate, because that is when it runs. A 2.24kWh battery charges in two and a half hours overnight and carries that load for ten hours.

The sums for one home, on Electric Ireland's Standard Smart Tariff (published rates, August 2026)	
Charge 2.4kWh overnight at the 17.04c night rate	41c
Replaces 1kWh bought at the 32.43c day rate	32c
Replaces 1kWh bought at the 34.60c evening peak rate	35c
Saving per day	**26c**
Saving per year	about €95
Median across every plan on the market	**about €100**
On a night-rate window at 6c to 13c	€165 to €265
Cost of the battery	€299
Pays for itself in	**about three years**

Working life	about fifteen years
Saving over the life of the box, at today's prices	**about €1,500**

Call it €100 a year on a typical plan, €150 to €250 on a night-rate window, for fifteen years, from a €300 box, without the household changing a thing. When Irish wind is being given away at negative prices under the tariff above, it rises again. The same sums for every smart plan on the market are in the table at the end of these notes.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"The dearest electricity in your house is the fridge. Not because it uses much, but because it runs all day at the day rate. A €300 box moves the fridge to the night rate and you never touch it again. That is the whole scheme. It is not clever. It is a plug."*

€300 ONCE. SAVINGS EVERY YEAR.

At €300 a home, two million batteries cost about €600 million, once. This year the State committed €755 million to emergency fuel supports. Since 2022 every household has had €1,500 in electricity credits, costing more than €3 billion. Those supports got people through a crisis, but the money is gone. A €200 credit disappears into the next bill. A €300 battery cuts the next bill, and the one after it, and every one after that.

The sums for the country	
Two million homes at €300	**€600m, once**
Storage added to the Irish system	1.6GW and 4.5GWh, roughly double what exists today
Peak reduction at 500W from each home across the four peak hours	**1GW, more than any power station in the country**
Fuel support packages, March to July 2026	€755m, gone by July
Electricity credits paid since 2022	€1,500 per home, over €3bn, gone
Set aside in the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund for climate projects	up to €630m a year, 2026 to 2030

Mr Smyth said:

> *"We have given every household €1,500 in credits since 2022 and every cent of it is gone. If we had given them a €300 battery in 2022 instead, they would be €400 better off by now and still have the battery. We paid five times over for the worse answer."*

TWO MILLION BATTERIES MAKE A POWER STATION

The arithmetic is brutally simple. One cycle a night gives each box 2kWh to spend. Spend it at 500 watts across the four peak hours of the day, seven to nine in the morning and five to seven in the evening, and each home takes 500 watts off the grid in exactly the hours the grid is built for. Two million homes at 500 watts is one gigawatt, off both peaks, every day, on a clock. That is more than any single power station in the country and about a fifth of the winter peak, from fridges. Two million 2.24kWh batteries hold about 4.5 gigawatt hours between them, and at 800 watts each they can put up to 1.6 gigawatts back into the country's homes at once. Ireland has about 800 megawatts of grid-scale batteries and 292 megawatts at Turlough Hill today, so this roughly doubles the country's storage in a year, at a fraction of the cost and with no planning applications. When the wind is up, the batteries charge. When electricity is dear, they discharge. They soak up power the country would otherwise waste and take demand off the grid in the evening when it is under most strain.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"It took five years and a billion euro to build emergency plants that have run twice. Two million kitchen batteries would double the country's storage in twelve months, and the planning application is a plug socket."*

WHY THE PEAK IS THE WHOLE GAME

Everything expensive in the Irish electricity system happens in the four peak hours. The dearest plant on the island, the open-cycle gas peakers and the emergency generators, exist to run in those hours and set the price in them. The capacity market buys plant for those hours. The wires are sized for those hours. Every scarcity alert, every margin warning and most of the imperfections bill trace back to them. Taking a gigawatt out of those four hours, at 500 watts a home on a clock, is the largest reduction in peak load available to the country, and at €300 a home it is by a distance the cheapest.

The effect on price is not just that the peak hours get cheaper. Irish demand today does nothing when the price rises; it is what economists call inelastic, and an inelastic market is priced at the mercy of the last plant it has to switch on. Two million boxes that leave the grid at the peak on a timetable give the market something it has never had: demand that answers the price. The peaker that only earned its money in those hours has no hours left to earn it in, the scarcity spike that needed a vertical demand line cannot form, the spread between the dearest and cheapest hour of the day narrows from both ends, and the wholesale price for every customer in the country, box or no box, comes down with it. The gas price the country cannot control still sets the level; the peakers the country pays for set the spikes, and the box takes the spikes away.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"A fridge that runs off a box for two hours in the morning and two in the evening is the biggest cut in peak demand this country can buy, and it costs €300. Do it in two million kitchens and the plant that only runs at teatime has nothing to run for, the spike it lived on cannot happen, and the price falls for everyone, including the house next door with no box. That is what putting a bit of elasticity into a market that never had any looks like. It looks like a fridge."*

A BILLION EURO OF BACKUP THAT HAS RUN TWICE

EirGrid built four temporary emergency power plants between 2023 and 2025, at North Wall and Huntstown in Dublin, Tarbert in Kerry and Shannonbridge in Offaly. They run on gas and diesel, are capped at 500 hours a year, and are understood to have cost up to €1 billion. EirGrid confirmed in August that none of them had been used until this summer, when it called on North Wall on 24 June during the heatwave and on Tarbert for a little over an hour on 12 August, when the eclipse took solar output from about 1,090 megawatts to 8. Shannonbridge, 262 megawatts and fully available since March 2025, has never been dispatched.

Both occasions were exactly what two million home batteries are for. The June event was an evening peak, and the batteries take 1.6 gigawatts off the evening peak every day. The eclipse was a ninety-minute drop in supply, and the batteries hold 4.5 gigawatt hours. Neither would have needed a diesel turbine. Ireland pays gas plants through the capacity market to exist, pays them again through the imperfections charge to stay switched on, and paid up to €1 billion for emergency plants that have run twice. The €600 million that would do most of that work is on a supermarket shelf.

On the electricity they have actually delivered, the emergency plants are some of the most expensive generation in the world: up to €1 billion in, about 1,000 megawatt hours out, or roughly €1,000 a kWh against 38 cent on a bill. The point is not just the cost. It is the direction of the cost. The plants have a five-year life, standby costs every year, and are to be dismantled by 2028. That is around €200 million a year for something that produces nothing and leaves nothing behind. Spread over the two and a half to three years the plants have been available, it is €500 million to €600 million of standby cost for two uses: about a quarter of a billion euro per event, before a litre of fuel is counted. If they are never called on again before they are dismantled, it is half a billion a time.

The batteries give the grid the same backup and run the money the other way. €600 million once. Both of this summer's events covered. Then €200 million to €500 million a year coming back to households, with a power station's worth of peak removed and surplus wind absorbed, for fifteen years. The scheme is in credit by its

second year and returns several times its cost over its life. The emergency plants never return a cent, by design. Same insurance, opposite direction.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"We built some of the most expensive generation in the world, a billion euro that has run twice, and the money is gone the day the plants are dismantled. Two million home batteries give the grid the same backup for less, and instead of costing €200 million a year they hand €200 million to €500 million a year back to households. Same insurance, opposite direction."*

STORM RESILIENCE IN EVERY HOME

A 2.24kWh battery at 800 watts keeps a fridge, a freezer, the lights, the router and the phones running for eight to twelve hours, longer if rationed, and indefinitely with a small solar panel. It will not run heating. Over 750,000 customers lost power in Storm Éowyn and rural homes were off longest. For those homes the battery means the freezer is kept, the phone stays charged and the boiler controls stay on.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"During Éowyn people in rural Ireland were boiling kettles on camping stoves and throwing out freezers full of food. The thing that would have kept the freezer running now costs less than the food that was in it."*

PUT SOME OF THE GRID INSIDE THE HOUSE

Ireland is about to spend billions strengthening the network for electric cars, heat pumps and rising demand, and that money is needed. But part of the problem can be dealt with another way. Rather than build every wire and transformer on the assumption that every home will want its maximum at the same moment, put some of the equipment inside the home. A battery moves demand out of the busiest hours, gets more out of the wires already in the ground, makes room for more renewable power and cuts the amount of wind that has to be switched off. That is good for the family, good for the grid and good for the next wind farm waiting to connect.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"We are about to spend billions on wires so that every house in the country can draw its maximum at the same moment at six o'clock. Or we could put a €300 box in the house so it does not need to. We are building a motorway for a rush hour that a battery would cancel."*

HOW TO PAY FOR IT

The Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund receives €2 billion a year from 2024 to 2030. €3.15 billion of it is set aside for climate and nature projects between 2026 and 2030, drawable at up to 22.5% of the fund in any year, roughly €630 million a year. It is for projects that help Ireland meet its emissions targets and are not already funded under the National Development Plan. A one-off national battery scheme that cuts gas burn at the evening peak and absorbs wind that would otherwise be switched off fits that purpose. Irish Rural Link is asking for one year's climate drawdown.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"There is €630 million a year in a fund whose whole purpose is to cut the amount of fossil fuel this country burns. Two million batteries cost €600 million and cut it every evening for fifteen years. It is not a hard sum."*

THE 800 WATT PLUG-IN RULE

A grid-connected plug-in unit in Ireland today needs an NC6 notification through a registered electrician, the same as a full rooftop system. Germany allows 800 watt plug-in systems with a simple online registration, and Britain followed in April 2026. The CRU consulted on a simplified route for units up to 800 watts, closing on 27 June 2026, and an ESB Networks working group was due to report to the Minister in September. Irish Rural Link is asking for that rule to be made now, with certified units carrying Irish plugs rather than grey imports, so the scheme can start on day one.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"In Germany you buy the battery in Lidl, plug it into the wall and it is legal. In Ireland the same box needs an electrician, a form and a notification to ESB Networks, as if it were a power station. It is a battery the size of a shoebox. This can be fixed with a signature."*

WHAT THE SCHEME NEEDS

One battery per home, tied to the meter, delivered by a voucher redeemed at retail so the supermarket supply chains do the distribution. A smart tariff set as the default for every recipient, with a day rate no higher than the standard rate, so the saving is automatic. A single national signal, run through the flexibility platform ESB Networks is already building, that tells every battery when tonight's cheapest window is, with the household able to override it by text. And the 800 watt rule in place before the first battery ships.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"We keep spending hundreds of millions treating the symptoms of high energy prices when the technology to tackle the problem is sitting on a supermarket shelf for €299.*
> *"Give the household the battery. It starts saving money on the first day. It keeps saving money every year after that. It keeps the fridge running when the power goes. And two million of them become part of the national electricity system.*
> *"A credit is gone when the bill arrives. The battery is still there in ten years."*

THE BOX ON THE BEST PLAN AT EACH SUPPLIER

One cycle a night, fridge on the box and the balance into the evening peak, at the rates that will apply once the October increases take effect. One row per supplier: the plan a household with a box should be on, the rate the box charges at on that plan, the saving a year, and that saving over a fifteen-year life at today's prices. Where a supplier's cheap window comes with a higher standing charge or a dearer rate on the rest of the house, the plain smart plan keeps more and is the one shown; the three worked examples below the table show why.

Supplier	Plan to use	Rate the box charges at	Saving a year	Over 15 years
Electric Ireland	Standard Smart Tariff (published)	17.0c night	€95	**€1,425**
Energia	Smart Data (published, from 12 Oct)	21.6c night	€58	**€870**
Bord Gáis Energy	EV Smart, 2am to 5am window (estimated)	~9.2c window	€186	**€2,790**
SSE Airtricity	EV Max, 11pm to 5am window (estimated)	~12c window	€171	**€2,565**
Flogas	Smart 30% (estimated)	22.7c night	€52	**€780**
Yuno Energy	EV window, 2am to 6am (estimated)	~11.9c window	€178	**€2,670**
Pinergy	Family Time, 7pm to midnight window (published)	27.5c window	€94	**€1,410**
Community Power	Smart (spring rates)	19.2c night	€98	**€1,470**
Ecopower	EV window (estimated)	~9.0c window	€138	**€2,070**
Median			about €100	**about €1,500**

Rates in cent per kWh including VAT. Formula: daily saving in cent equals (1kWh times the day rate) plus (1kWh times the peak rate) minus (2.4kWh times the rate the box charges at); annual saving equals the daily figure times 365; fifteen-year saving equals the annual figure times fifteen at today's prices, with battery fade and future price rises not netted. Worked example, Electric Ireland: 32.43 plus 34.60 minus 2.4 times 17.04 equals 26.13 cent a day, €95 a year, €1,425 over fifteen years. Where a plan has no peak band the day rate stands in for the peak rate. Published means taken from the supplier's own tariff page; estimated means spring 2026 rates uplifted by the announced increase, and the EV windows at Bord Gáis, SSE Airtricity, Yuno and Ecopower

assume those plans keep their standard smart day and peak bands with the window added, as they did in spring, pending the October EV rates. The windows are open to any smart-metered household; no electric vehicle is required. PrepayPower and Waterpower do not publish a time-of-use plan. Dynamic tariffs are excluded because their price changes every half hour.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"Same box, same meter, same supplier: €54 on one Bord Gáis plan and €186 on another. The only thing that changed was which plan the household was put on. That is why the plan matters as much as the battery, and why the card in the box tells people what to check."*

HOW THE CHEAP NIGHT GETS TAKEN BACK

Every supplier sells a cheap night. Several take part of it back on the same bill, through a higher standing charge for the meter configuration the cheap plan needs, or a dearer rate on the hours outside the window, which is most of what a house uses. Three worked examples, on an average house that uses 9.5kWh a day the box cannot shift, 3kWh at night, 5.5kWh by day and 1kWh at the peak.

Electric Ireland. On the Standard Smart Tariff the box charges at 17.0c and saves €95 a year. Night Boost has a 10.9c window from 2am to 4am, and on it the box saves €179, which is €84 more. But Night Boost carries a standing charge of €328.58 against €250.77, €78 more, and a day rate of 37.6c against 32.4c on the 5.5kWh a day the box cannot shift, about €130 more. A household moved from the smart plan to Night Boost gains €84 on the box and pays €208 more on everything else. Net, €124 worse off. The plan to use is the Standard Smart Tariff.

Energia, from 12 October. On Smart Data the box charges at 21.6c and saves €58. EV Smart Drive has a 12.3c window from 2am to 6am, and on it the box saves €186, which is €128 more. But the EV plan charges 40.2c on every hour outside the window against 31.7c by day and 21.6c at night on Smart Data, about €235 more a year on the rest of the house, and from October carries a standing charge €61 higher. Net, €168 worse off. The plan to use is Smart Data, and the reason its figure is only €58 is that Energia's October increase raises its night rates more than its day rates.

Bord Gáis Energy, from 9 October. On Standard Smart the box charges at 24.3c and saves €54. EV Smart has a window of about 9.2c from 2am to 5am, and in the spring rates the plan kept the same day and peak rates and the same standing charge as Standard Smart, so nothing was taken back and the box saves €186. If the October EV rates keep that structure it is the best plan in the market for the box; if they do not, the Standard Smart figure stands. The same applies to SSE Airtricity's EV Max and Yuno's EV window.

The dynamic tariffs take it back with a different lever. Bord Gáis Smart Dynamic carries a base unit rate of 19.02c on top of the wholesale price and a standing charge of €347.56, €85 above its own smart plan; Energia's carries a 21.97c daytime base rate and €299.75, €35 above. The plan sold as direct access to the wholesale market has the highest fixed charge in the range and a floor of about 20c a kWh under a wholesale price of zero. The night rates are real. The bill is built so that a household cannot easily tell what they are worth, and that is what the three checks on the card in the box are for: the night rate, the day rate against the flat plan, and the standing charge against the flat plan.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"They sell you a ten cent night and charge you €78 a year for the privilege of having a night, then five cent more on every unit you use by day. The window is real. So is the rest of the page. A household with a box and the three checks can see it in a minute, and a household without them never will."*

8. SOURCES AND FIGURES

Network Imperfections Charge. The SEM Committee set the Network Imperfections Charge for Tariff Year 2025/26 at €790.24 million all-island, equivalent to €19.93 per MWh, up from €567.21 million and €14.62 per MWh in 2024/25. The charge recovers Dispatch Balancing Costs, of which constraint and curtailment compensation is the largest component, and is levied flat on every kWh sold. The figure of €83.71 a year for a typical Irish household is the SEM Committee's own consumer impact estimate. Sources: SEM-25-053 (11 September 2025) and SEM-26-46 (28 August 2026), Table 2. The 2026/27 charge is €793.23 million, €18.81 per MWh, from 1 October 2026. EirGrid and SONI's Imperfections Charges

Forecast for Tariff Year 2025/26 (SEM-25-028, 30 May 2025) shows that €529.56 million of the forecast arises from running conventional units outside the market to meet system security requirements. Section 4.2.4 and Table 6 of the same document set a provision of €34.92 million for constrained wind and solar, stated to be based on the actual CDISCOUNT payments wind and solar participants received from 1 May 2024 to 30 April 2025, against €28.37 million in the 2023/24 backcast, and state that wind and solar are not currently paid for curtailment in the SEM. The same document states that higher demand reduces Dispatch Balancing Costs because must-run units clear in the market.

Dispatch-down. EirGrid reported that in the first half of 2026 it brought 86.8% of available wind energy onto the power system in Ireland, with 13.2% dispatched down, and 88.8% of all renewable generation including solar, with 11.2% dispatched down. Wind Energy Ireland analysis of the same figures put the lost volume at enough to power approximately 667,000 homes.

Network charges and PSO levy. The CRU approved 2026/27 network charges with an expected impact of approximately €41.25 a year, or €3.44 a month, on a typical domestic customer, applying from 1 October 2026 to 30 September 2027, after reducing the network companies' revenue requests by €138 million. The CRU also approved a 2026/27 PSO Levy of €41.48 million, a 66% reduction, equivalent to 51 cent a month for domestic customers.

Domestic distribution charges, 2025/26. The domestic time-of-use distribution tariff divides consumption into night off-peak (23:00 to 08:00), daytime off-peak (08:00 to 23:00 excluding peak) and peak (17:00 to 19:00), at 0.802 cent, 6.206 cent and 6.827 cent per kWh respectively, excluding VAT. The annual standing charge is €86.04 for DUoS Group 1 (urban domestic) and €125.49 for DUoS Group 2 (rural). Source: ESB Networks DAC Statement of Charges, Revision 22, effective 1 October 2025, approved by the CRU.

Dynamic tariffs. Since June 2026 Ireland's five largest electricity suppliers have been required by the CRU to offer a Standard Dynamic Price Tariff, under which the dynamic unit rate changes every half-hour in line with day-ahead wholesale prices, subject to a regulatory cap. Day-ahead prices are published the evening before.

2026 price increases. SSE Airtricity, announced 4 September: from 5 October 2026, electricity unit rate up 9.4% and standing charge up 6.1%, a typical electricity bill up 8.9% or €171.55 a year; gas unit rate up 11.6%, typical gas bill up 9.3% or €138.70; dual fuel up 9.1% or €311.48; about 296,000 variable-rate customers. Bord Gáis Energy, announced 9 September: from 9 October 2026, electricity unit rate up 9.1% and standing charge up 7.2%, typical bill up 8.8% or €177 a year; gas unit rate up 10.6% and standing charge up 7%, typical gas bill up 9.3% or €140; dual fuel up 9.1% or about €317; more than 400,000 electricity customers; the Smart Dynamic base unit rate rises 13.7%. Energia, announced 11 September: from 12 October 2026, typical electricity bill up 4.73% or €87 a year, standing charge up 5%; gas up 9.38% or €143; dual fuel up 6.73% or €230; about 220,000 electricity customers. Pinergy: 7.6% from 14 September 2026, about €169 a year. Flogas: 10.9% electricity and 11.8% gas from 20 July 2026, about €214 and €180 a year, following a 7% electricity rise in December 2025. Electric Ireland: 8% electricity and 7.7% gas from 1 July 2026, about €138 and €117 a year. PrePayPower: just under 12% electricity from 1 June 2026. Yuno Energy: 9.5% to 11% electricity from June 2026. Sources: supplier notices, RTÉ, Irish Times, Irish Examiner, TheJournal.ie.

Home battery calculation and tariff sources. The unit assumed is 2.24kWh with 1,000W charging and 800W output, delivering about 2kWh a day after losses; a background load of about 200W is a typical figure for an Irish home and the CRU's typical annual consumption is 4,200kWh. Tariff rates: Electric Ireland, Home Electric+ Standard Smart Tariff Saver 20% and Night Boost, as published for August 2026 (32.43c, 17.04c, 34.60c; 37.60c, 18.54c, 10.88c boost; standing charge €250.77 urban smart, €328.58 day-night configuration). Energia, tariff page dated 1 September 2026 with the standard rates applying from 12 October 2026 (Smart Data 39.81c, 27.20c, 45.57c ex VAT before the 27% discount; Standard Smart Tariff 39.81c, 29.00c, 45.57c ex VAT before 15%; EV Smart Drive 40.94c and 12.49c ex VAT before 10%; EV standing charge €311.21 ex VAT from 12 October against €255.29 for smart plans). Bord Gáis Energy, tariff page, smart rates from 9 October 2026 (48.49c day, 35.80c night, 59.03c peak, standing charge €262.38, all before discount; Smart Dynamic base rate 19.02c, standing charge €347.56). SSE Airtricity, current domestic tariff schedule ELEC-4 (43.52c, 27.97c, 48.74c before discount) uplifted by the announced 9.4% unit-rate rise from 5 October 2026. Pinergy, Lifestyle and Smart Tariffs page, pricing effective 14 September 2026 (Standard Smart Tariff 45.80c, 34.84c, 49.04c; Family Time 27.48c from 7pm to midnight; EV Night Time 11.94c from 2am to 5am, no longer on sale since 21 May 2026; standing charge €283.47). Flogas, Yuno Energy, Community Power and Ecopower from comparison-site tables of spring 2026, uplifted where the supplier has since announced an increase. Lidl's Tronic 2.24kWh unit went on sale in Germany from 21 May 2026 at €299 with a Lidl Plus discount, €399 list (pv magazine, 19 May 2026). The storm figures assume a 150W to 250W essential load.

Storage. About 800MW of grid-scale battery storage is operational on the island of Ireland, plus 292MW at Turlough Hill. Cornwall Insight put lithium-ion storage at about 2.7GWh in 2025; Turlough Hill holds about 1.6GWh. AFRY, for Energy

Storage Ireland in June 2026, estimated that 2GW of additional storage would save consumers €102 million a year and cut dispatch-down by 11%. Two million 2.24kWh units are 4.48GWh and, at 800W each, 1.6GW.

Funding comparisons. The Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund receives €2 billion a year from 2024 to 2030, with €3.15 billion set aside for designated environmental projects between 2026 and 2030, drawable at up to 22.5% of the fund in any year (NTMA). Fuel supports in 2026 comprised a €250 million package in March and a €505 million package announced on 12 April, with measures running to 31 July 2026 (Department of the Taoiseach). Domestic electricity customers received €1,500 each in credits across nine payments between April 2022 and January 2025 (SEAI); the 2022/23 €600 tranche alone cost over €1.2 billion across 2.2 million accounts (Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment).

Plug-in rule. Grid-parallel plug-in units in Ireland currently require an NC6 notification through a registered electrician. The CRU's consultation on a simplified route for units up to 800W closed on 27 June 2026; an ESB Networks working group was due to report to the Minister in September 2026. The UK introduced an 800W plug-in allowance on 15 April 2026.

Irish Rural Link campaigns. National Broadband Plan: contract signed 19 November 2019 for about 540,000 premises, since revised to 566,000; NBI reported more than 500,000 premises able to order and 183,000 connected on 29 July 2026, with average take-up of 36% rising above 60% in longer-served areas, and the main build due to complete by the end of 2026; six county completions including Offaly, Laois and Leitrim announced for September 2026 (Department of Culture, Communications and Sport). Irish Rural Link CEO Seamus Boland called on the Minister to account for the stalled rollout on Newstalk Breakfast in 2021. Access to cash: the Finance (Provision of Access to Cash Infrastructure) Act was passed by the Oireachtas in May 2025 and commenced in late 2025 following the Central Bank's national assessment; it requires an ATM or comparable cash service within 10km of the vast majority of homes and businesses, a minimum number of ATMs per 100,000 people with a proportion available 24 hours, and allows the Central Bank to require a solution within eight weeks where a deficiency is confirmed. Irish Rural Link engaged with Government and the Central Bank throughout and welcomed both the Bill (RTÉ, 23 January 2024) and its commencement (Irish Rural Link statement, December 2025).

Emergency generation. EirGrid procured four temporary emergency generation plants at the direction of the CRU under the EirGrid, Electricity and Turf (Amendment) Act 2022: North Wall (193MW, gas, connected December 2023), Huntstown, Tarbert (150MW, distillate) and Shannonbridge (262MW, eight diesel-fuelled turbines, fully available from March 2025). Each is limited to 500 running hours a year and in place until 2027, extendable to 2028. The reported cost is up to €1 billion. EirGrid confirmed to the Irish Times (17 August 2026) that none of the plants had been dispatched before 2026, and that it used North Wall on 24 June 2026 and Tarbert during the eclipse on 12 August 2026, when SEMO issued a margin warning from 6.55pm to 8.21pm. EirGrid told the Offaly Independent (21 August 2026) that Shannonbridge "has not been dispatched for adequacy purposes." The per-kWh and per-year figures are Irish Rural Link's calculations: about 1,000 megawatt hours assumes a few hours at North Wall in June and just over an hour at Tarbert in August; €200 million a year is €1 billion over a five-year life and excludes standby and fuel costs; the per-event figure is that annual cost over the period the plants have been available, from North Wall's connection in December 2023, divided by two dispatches; the €200 million to €500 million a year for the battery scheme is two million homes at €100 to €250 a year. Sources: Irish Times 14, 17 and 19 August 2026; Offaly Independent 21 August 2026; ESB Networks; planning documentation for the Tarbert and Shannonbridge sites.

Mr Smyth said:

> *"Every number in these notes comes from the regulator, the grid operator, the suppliers or the Government's own press releases. We did not have to invent anything. That is the part that should worry people."*

Media contact

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Briain Smyth is available for interview at Screggan on Tuesday 15 September.