

RESS 6: What Has Actually Changed From Previous Rounds

The Terms and Conditions for the sixth Renewable Electricity Support Scheme competition (“RESS 6”) have now been published. There are material differences in the Terms for RESS 6 compared to previous RESS rounds. This is largely due to the implementation of the non-price criteria from the EU Net Zero Industry Act. In this note, we have considered these new elements and highlight what developers should look out for in their bidding strategy.

NZIA Integration is the Headline Change

RESS 6 is the first RESS round to expressly incorporate EU net zero industrial policy. The Terms and Conditions incorporate relevant aspects of Article 26 of the Net Zero Industry Act, together with Commission Implementing Regulations (EU) 2025/1176 and (EU) 2025/1178, aligning Ireland’s RESS auctions with the NZIA. This is a structural addition with no precedent in RESS 1 to RESS 5 and it drives most of the other changes described below.

Two Technology Specific Pots Replace Cross Technology Competition

The RESS 6 Auction comprises an Onshore Wind Pot and a Solar Pot. Onshore Wind and Hybrid Wind and Storage projects are allocated to the Onshore Wind Pot. Solar and Hybrid Solar and Storage projects are allocated to the Solar Pot. For a Hybrid Wind and Solar (or Wind and Solar and Storage) project, allocation follows whichever of onshore wind or solar is the Primary Technology by MW capacity. Each Pot clears independently, with its own Composite Evaluation Score ranking, its own Final Competition Ratio and its own Pot Auction Starting Quantity.

This is a genuine structural change from the single, cross technology auction pool used in previous RESS rounds, where onshore wind and solar bids competed against each other directly on price within one clearing process. Under RESS 6, wind and solar no longer compete head to head. The Minister determines a Pot Representative Maximum Quantity and a Pot Representative Minimum Quantity in annual GWh for each Pot, having regard to available volumes recommended by the Regulatory Authority, the renewable energy targets in the National Energy and Climate Plan as updated by the Climate Action Plan and the Programme for Government and other policy considerations and these figures are published in the Auction Information Pack ahead of the auction submission window.

The practical implications are worth noting for bid strategy. First, developers should not assume the pricing dynamics of one technology will inform the other’s clearing outcome in the same way they did in a blended pool. Each Pot has its own supply curve, competition assessment and Final Competition Ratio. Second, for hybrid Wind and Solar projects, the choice of Primary Technology determines which Pot and therefore which competitive dynamics and Maximum Offer Price

Considered, the project is measured against and this should be factored into project configuration decisions well before the qualification deadline. Third, splitting the auction by technology is understood to reflect a broader policy aim of maintaining diversification in the renewable generation mix, rather than allowing the technology with the lowest marginal cost (typically solar) to dominate the available volume in a single clearing pool, as had been a risk under the combined pool designs of earlier RESS rounds.



Winner Selection is no Longer Price Only

This is the most consequential design change for bid strategy within each Pot. Offers are now ranked on a Composite Evaluation Score calculated as the sum of a Price Score, a Resilience Score and an Energy System Integration Score, rather than on price alone. The Price Score carries a maximum weight of 0.85, the Resilience Score a maximum of 0.05 and the Energy System Integration Score a maximum of 0.10, out of a total range of 0 to 1.00. A modestly higher priced bid can now outrank a cheaper one if it captures resilience or system integration points, a genuine departure from the price clearing logic of earlier rounds.

Energy System Integration Score

This score rewards hybrid configuration and is calculated separately from price and resilience. It is the sum of a Secondary Technology Score and a Storage Score and is built directly from the information an applicant supplies on Primary/Secondary Technology split and Electricity Storage Duration at qualification stage.

Secondary Technology Score

This component is available only to Hybrid Wind and Solar, or Hybrid Wind and Solar and Storage projects. Where no Secondary Technology is offered, the score is zero. It is banded by the Secondary Technology Percentage: 0 for less than 10%, 0.0063 for 10% up to 20%, 0.0125 for 20% up to 30%, 0.0188 for 30% up to 40% and 0.0250 for 40% up to 49.99% the maximum available under this sub-component. This creates a clear incentive to configure a genuinely mixed wind and solar project (up to just under a 50/50 split) rather than a token secondary allocation and combined with the Pot allocation rule above, it also confirms that a hybrid project’s Primary Technology stays the sole determinant of Pot placement even where the Secondary Technology component is being scored separately.

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Storage Score

A project offering no Storage receives a Storage Score of zero. To qualify for any Storage Score, the Electricity Storage Capacity must be at least equal to the Total Offer Quantity of the RESS 6 Project (the Minimum Storage Requirement) for example, a 10 MW Hybrid Solar and Storage project needs at least 10 MWh of storage, which can be structured as, say, 10 MW for one hour or 5 MW for two hours. Once that threshold is met, the score is banded by Electricity Storage Duration: 0 for less than 2 hours, 0.0150 for 2 to under 4 hours, 0.0300 for 4 to under 6 hours, 0.0450 for 6 to under 8 hours, 0.0600 at exactly 8 hours and 0.0750, the maximum, for durations exceeding 8 hours. Because the two sub-scores are additive and each capped, the practical ceiling on the overall Energy System Integration Score (0.10) is reached only by combining a substantial secondary technology allocation with a longer duration storage asset. Developers should model this trade-off explicitly against the cost of over building storage purely for score points.

It is also worth flagging that realising the full benefit of the Energy System Integration Score depends on wider grid and market reforms, including Maximum Export Capacity sharing arrangements for co-located hybrid sites, that are still being implemented separately from the RESS 6 rules themselves. Developers pursuing a high-scoring hybrid configuration should confirm the status of those enabling grid arrangements for their specific connection point rather than assuming the RESS 6 scoring mechanism alone guarantees a workable technical solution.

The scoring interacts directly with enduring compliance. Where a project has been awarded a non-zero Resilience or Energy System Integration Score, the generator must build and operate the project consistent with the configuration declared in its Qualification Declaration, Resilience Declaration, Application for Qualification and Offer and must submit documentary evidence by a fixed milestone confirming the project was constructed accordingly and that Installed Renewable Capacity and Electricity Storage Capacity remain consistent with those declarations. Failure triggers a breach of the Terms and Conditions. Locking in secondary technology or storage configuration purely to win points therefore carries real downstream construction and compliance risk if project economics later argue for a different build.

A New Resilience Score

The Resilience Score is entirely new to RESS 6. It reflects the contribution of the project to supply chain diversification, assessed by reference to the number of Final Products and Main Specific Components sourced from countries presenting supply chain concentration risk under the NZIA Commission Communication.

For onshore wind, the Minimum Resilience Requirement includes thresholds such as at least 75% of Final Products not originating from or assembled in the People's Republic

of China, no more than three Main Specific Components per product from that jurisdiction, equivalent restrictions on drivetrains and at least 50% of permanent magnets not originating from or assembled there.

Solar projects face parallel country-of-origin thresholds on assembly, Main Specific Components, inverters, cells and modules. Successful applicants awarded the score must provide supporting documentary evidence, including customs clearance documentation and OEM records, by a fixed milestone date and must notify the Minister of any subsequent component replacement that could jeopardise a Resilience Score already awarded. None of this existed in prior RESS terms.

Cybersecurity and Data Security

RESS 6 introduces a standalone cybersecurity and data security regime with no equivalent in earlier rounds. Projects must comply with the cybersecurity and data security requirements of Article 5 of Regulation (EU) 2025/1176, which requires operational control to be exercised by an operator established in the EEA and appropriate technical, operational and organisational measures aligned with Article 21(2) of the NIS 2 Directive covering risk analysis, incident handling, business continuity, supply chain security and access control. These obligations extend to "Relevant Suppliers" providing ICT products or services to the project. Where a generator or relevant supplier is subject to the jurisdiction of a third country in specified circumstances, such as mandatory vulnerability reporting to that country's authorities, or a public statement attributing malicious cyber activity to actors operating from it, the project must submit a formal Cybersecurity Plan addressing EEA data storage and processing, supply-chain mapping and technical controls preventing unauthorised transfer of data outside the EEA. This is a compliance workstream that should be scoped early, particularly for projects with non-EEA equipment suppliers or parent structures.

Responsible Business Conduct Tied to CSDDD

RESS 6 also introduces a due diligence and reporting obligation calibrated to the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive. Applicants within CSDDD scope must demonstrate action on the core due diligence elements in Article 5(1)(a) to (g) of the Directive and publish a public statement on responsible business conduct, while applicants outside CSDDD scope face a lighter reporting obligation on a narrower set of due diligence elements. This tiered structure and the CSDDD linkage itself, is new to RESS 6.



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General Route to Market Exit

RESS 6 does not create a general right for a successful applicant to withdraw a project from the scheme in order to pursue an alternative route to market, such as a corporate PPA. Once a Generator has executed an Implementation Agreement and received a Letter of Offer, it is not entitled to withdraw from its obligations under RESS 6. This is a firmer position than in some previous RESS rounds, where the Minister retained a degree of discretion to permit withdrawal in appropriate circumstances. RESS 6 removes that discretion in favour of a blanket prohibition once an Award has been converted into an Implementation Agreement and Letter of Offer.

The only routes out of a live Award are the two narrowly defined Relief Event pathways in the Implementation Agreement. These are a System Operator Delay (grid-side delay attributable to the TSO/DSO) or a Judicial Review Delay (a third-party judicial review challenge to planning or grid consents). Where a System Operator Delay will prevent Commercial Operation within twenty-four months of the extended Longstop Date, the Generator may submit an irrevocable System Operator Delay Withdrawal Request, supported by a director's declaration to that effect, as an alternative to requesting a Longstop Date extension instead which requires a parallel commitment to use reasonable endeavours to mitigate the delay. An equivalent structure applies to Judicial Review Delays, save that the withdrawal request there can only be made once the JR Delay Relief Request shows the delay will not resolve in time. In both cases, acceptance of the request sits entirely within the Minister's sole discretion.

Where a withdrawal request (or a maximum 24-month relief extension) is accepted, the Letter of Offer is withdrawn immediately, the Performance Security is returned in full (less any prior deductions) and the project is not barred from competing in future Irish Government renewable energy support schemes for which it would otherwise be eligible, solely as a result of that withdrawal.



Key Auction Timelines

The published RESS 6 Auction Timetable sets out the following key dates:

- Qualification submission window: 30 July 2026 – 27 August 2026
- Final qualification decisions: 21 October 2026
- Auction submission window: 29 October – 5 November 2026
- Provisional results: 18 November 2026
- Final auction results: 2 December 2026
- Notices of Award: 10 December 2026

This timetable remains subject to change, including in connection with the finalisation of State aid approval for RESS 6.

Reflections for the Market

Under RESS 6, price discovery has not disappeared. It still carries 85% of the evaluation weight but the State has deliberately made room for two policy objectives, via implementation of the Net Zero Industry Act requirements, that sit outside pure cost effectiveness. These are industrial resilience and system flexibility. That is a meaningful bet. It presumes developers can absorb new diligence and reporting costs without those costs simply working their way back into Offer Prices and it presumes the wider grid and market reforms needed to make hybrid configurations viable will keep pace with the incentives now built into the auction. Neither presumption is guaranteed and the gap between the scoring mechanism and the enabling infrastructure around it (MEC sharing in particular) is arguably the single biggest execution risk in the round.

The stricter withdrawal position is consistent with this shift in posture. Where earlier RESS rounds preserved a degree of Ministerial flexibility, RESS 6 signals that an Award, once converted into an Implementation Agreement, is treated as a firm commitment rather than an option. Combined with the binding nature of Resilience and Energy System Integration Score commitments, the overall effect is a scheme that rewards more sophisticated bid design at qualification stage but affords materially less room to recalibrate a project's commercial strategy once an Award has been made. For clients weighing whether to bid, the more useful question may not be whether a given configuration scores well on paper, but whether the underlying commitments it locks in, on sourcing, on data residency, on hybrid build-out, remain ones the project can live with for the better part of two decades. We would be glad to work through that assessment with you ahead of your bid.

Contact Our Energy Group



Niall Donnelly
PARTNER
Energy Projects & Regulation

+353 (0) 1 237 3700
ndonnelly@philiplee.ie
Niall Donnelly



Alice Whittaker
PARTNER
Planning & Environment

+353 (0) 1 237 3700
awhittaker@philiplee.ie
Alice Whittaker



Alison Hardiman
CONSULTANT
Planning & Environment

+353 (0) 1 237 3700
ahardiman@philiplee.ie
Alison Hardiman PhD, BL



Eoghan Doyle
PARTNER
Corporate M&A

+353 (0) 1 237 3700
edoyle@philiplee.ie
Eoghan Doyle



Simon O'Neill
PARTNER
Project Finance

+353 (0) 1 237 3700
soneill@philiplee.ie
Simon O'Neill



John O'Donoghue
PARTNER
Property

+353 (0) 1 237 3700
jodonoghue@philiplee.ie
John O'Donoghue



Angelyn Rowan
PARTNER
Construction

+353 (0) 1 237 3700
arowan@philiplee.ie
Angelyn Rowan



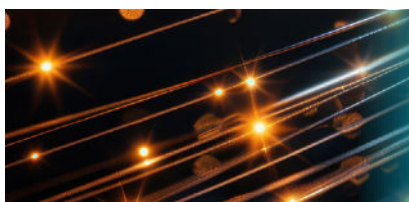
Kerri Crossen
PARTNER
Construction

+353 (0) 1 237 3700
kcrossen@philiplee.ie
Kerri Crossen



Max Loughrey
SENIOR ASSOCIATE
Energy Projects & Regulation

+353 (0) 1 237 3700
mloughrey@philiplee.ie
Max Loughrey



A very knowledgeable and dedicated team with a genuine interest in renewables and energy matters. The team at Philip Lee has built up considerable sector specific expertise, and they have the capacity and skills to provide swift and high- quality legal advice on a range of complex topics.

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