Improving local acceptance for grid development and speeding up permitting procedures: some practical tools and experiences

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Today’s agenda

- Who is talking – the Renewables Grid Initiative
- Why does this topic matter?
- Considerations on local acceptance
- Considerations on speeding up permitting
- Some recommendations and a suggestion
Who is talking – Introducing the Renewables Grid Initiative

Focus of electricity grid operators:
„We need to build power grids without delay“

Focus of NGOs:
„We need renewable energies – without negative impact on nature and people“

“We want a grid built in time and in line with environmental objectives and with people’s concerns”
Why do we need to talk about acceptance and pace of permitting?

- Inefficient/slow permitting
- Lack of stakeholder acceptance
- Delays
- Higher costs and investment risk
- Decrease in energy security
- Decarbonisation slowing down
- Electors opinion
The sea has many users

Renewables
Oil/Gas
Fishery
Military
Pipelines

Seabirds
Shipping
Tourism
Coastal communities
Marine environment

Grids
Stakeholder acceptance is to a large extent a procedural issue

Acceptance of the process/legitimacy

„I do not like the final decision, but I accept the decision-making process.“

Acceptance of outcome

„I embrace the details of the final decision as my own.“
Main first step: solid stakeholder mapping

- Local groups – sometimes hard to locate, but crucial
- Individuals can count a lot
- Seize experience of your colleagues
- Ask stakeholders for stakeholders
- Understand relationships between stakeholders
- Understand their interests, influence and what they can contribute

Stakeholder mapping is never „done“
Some points to consider in designing stakeholder engagement

- Type of engagement depends on type of stakeholder, project stage, context
- Often there is a necessity to inform before you can consult
- Seize the time of stakeholders well
- Be in touch on a regular basis, even if nothing is going on
- Personal relationships count
- Be reliable

Stakeholder engagement should have a dedicated resource
Some options on how to reach local stakeholders

- Public consultation/engagement events
- Mobile consultation van
- Hiring a vacant shop in town centre
- Advertising the project/events
- Identify hard to reach groups and go where they are
- Offer to establish community forums with an independent Chair
- Ask local bodies what techniques work well in the area
- Look beyond the energy sector
Improving local acceptance and speeding up is not a contradiction

Some are convinced:

Stakeholder acceptance | Faster permitting

However, many practitioners explain:

Stakeholder acceptance | Faster permitting

- Seizing stakeholder knowledge → Design better projects
- Identify and resolve critical issues → Avoid going down the wrong path
- Avoid escalating conflict → Save time on „fire-fighting“
- Engaging more efficiently → Loose less time on the go
Meanwhile, the North Sea is getting crowded…

…and this is an issue, especially for environmental stakeholders, for permitting authorities and the industry!

Source: Greenpeace Germany
Industry and authority experts agree on challenges for marine developments

**Challenges for marine developments**

- Uncertainty about impact of projects
- Uncertainty about cumulative impacts
- Missing information exchange
- Missing coordinated procedures
- Lack of cross-border mutual understanding

**Lead to**

- Delays in permitting/building & costs
- Punitive measures on future developments
- Adoption of precautionary measures
- Deteriorated acceptance

All this slows down permitting processes
Proposed work plan for an RGI activity

Contribution to better protection in the marine environment

Identify key players → Identify heavy development areas → Stimulate research cooperation → Coordinated assessment of cumulative impacts → More sustainable use of marine space, Reduced consenting risk, Save time and money

Identify research needs
NSCOGI & friends still have a lot of work to do

Realizing propositions which would help…

- A project database for existing knowledge and contacts
- Comprehensive marine spatial plans
- Harmonized approach to spatial planning
- Common approach for environmental assessments
- Seize grid assets to raise data
- Regulatory system which supports meshed solutions

…requires multi-stakeholder dialogue and activity
Thanks a lot

And Save the Dates

5th European Grid Conference – November 19, Brussels
Register via http://gridconference.eu/

RGI marine experts workshop – December 9, Brussels
Registration will soon be open at http://www.renewables-grid.eu/