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State to unveil electric car plan

By Niamh Connolly
Political Correspondent

A government plan to spearhead a move by Irish motorists to electric cars is to be unveiled shortly.

The Electric Transport Programme, to be announced by Minister for Energy Eamon Ryan and Minister for Transport Noel Dempsey, is aimed at helping Ireland meet EU targets on greenhouse gas emissions.

The plan will use Israel, Denmark and Portugal as models for a new electric grid system being developed for 'clean vehicles'.

A senior ESB official last week visited Israel to assess the $200 million grid project led by international software company Better Place, which was adopted there last year.

The software company has piloted an electric grid network to recharge and replace batteries for standard-size electric cars and SUVs now being manufactured by Renault and Nissan in Israel.

A spokeswoman for Ryan confirmed he had discussions with company representatives and has been working on an electric vehicles policy that will be announced shortly.

Fine Gael's energy spokesman Simon Coveney this weekend called for "radical and ambitious thinking" on the issue by the government and the ESB.

Coveney last week met with ESB chief executive Padraig McManus to discuss the aplicability of a grid network here for a new generation of clean vehicles being pioneered in Israel and Denmark.

Denmark's largest utility company, DONG Energy – which generates 18 per cent of its electricity from wind energy – subscribed to the new business model earlier this year.

The new electric grid pilot scheme for cars in Israel involves 'smart charge' stations for batteries.

The cars are equipped with GPS-style energy monitors to alert drivers when they need to plug into an electric recharge grid operator system.