

East Meath - North Dublin Grid Upgrade Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR): Volume 3

Appendix A8.2 – European, National and Local Policy

EirGrid

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Appendix A8.2 – European, National and Local Policy

Table 1: European Union and International Policy

| Policy Document | Summary |
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| European Green Deal, 2019 and EU 'Fit for 55', 2023 | In December 2019, the European Commission (the Commission) published a Communication on a European Green Deal (EGD), setting out its increased ambition on climate action. It presents an initial roadmap of key policies and measures needed to achieve the ambition of becoming the first climate neutral bloc in the world by 2050. This will require a transformation of the EU's economy, with sectors such as transport, buildings, agriculture, and energy production all having key roles to play. As well as setting out the policy and legislative programme for all key economic sectors to deliver on the EU's climate ambition, the EGD also addresses the EU's overall ambition on climate targets. It proposes increasing the EU's emissions reduction targets for 2030 from 40% to at least 50% and towards 55% compared with 1990 levels. In December 2020, EU leaders agreed to reduce GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. The European Climate Law (July 2021) writes the goal to become climate-neutral by 2050 into law and sets the 55% reduction by 2030 as an intermediate target towards this goal. Achievement of the EU-wide target is facilitated through the European Union 'Fit for 55' legislative package, which aims to make all sectors of the EU's economy fit to meet the 55% reduction target. The package includes the Emissions Trading System (ETS) and Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR). The ETS was established by the EU for high-emitting sectors and sets separate legally binding national targets for emissions reductions in non-ETS sectors. For Non-ETS sectors, the nationally binding targets for Member States for 2021 to 2030 are set by the Effort Sharing Regulation. The ESR requires Ireland to reduce its emissions from these sectors by 42% by 2030, relative to 2005 levels. |
| The Paris Agreement, 2015 | Superseding the 2005 Kyoto Protocol, the 2015 Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), addresses greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation and finance starting in the year 2020, which aims to keep the global average temperature rise this century to below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The Conference of the Parties (COP) meet annually to assess the progress made in achieving this aim. At COP26 in Glasgow (2021), the Glasgow Climate Pact was adopted, which included the finalisation of the 'Paris Agreement rulebook'. This set of rules lays out how countries are held accountable for delivering on their climate action promises and self-targets under their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). A key outcome of COP28 in Dubai (2023), was the adoption of a fossil fuel phase-out agreement, committing the parties to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems in order to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The agreement also included a pledge to triple renewable energy capacity globally by 2030. |
| Recast Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) | The ambition set out in the Paris Agreement, as well as technological developments including cost reductions for investments in renewable energy, led to new objectives being set in the recast Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001 (known as RED II). In October 2023, Directive (EU) 2023/2413 ("RED III") was published to amend and update on RED II. RED II established a binding target of at least 32% of renewable energy for the EU by 2030. The renewable energy target set under RED II has been reviewed upwards under RED III to 42.5%. RED III also introduces a requirement on Member States to aim to increase their renewable energy share to 45% by 2030. Member States are required to establish their contribution to the achievement of that target as part of their integrated national energy and climate plans. The Commission also encouraged investments in new, flexible and clean technologies. |
| Europe 2030 Climate and Energy Framework | EU leaders agreed in October 2014 on new climate and energy objectives for 2030 following a proposal put forward by the European Commission. The 2030 framework aims to make the EU's economy and energy system more competitive, secure and sustainable. A centrepiece of the 2030 framework is the binding domestic target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, which has now been updated under the 'EU Fit for 55' package to 55% below 1990 levels by 2030. The aim of this target is to put the EU on the most cost-effective path towards its agreed objective of an 80-95% reduction by 2050. EU leaders also agreed on raising the share of renewable energy to at least 27%. |
| Energy Roadmap 2050 | The Energy Roadmap 2050 was published by the European Commission in 2011 and explores the transition of the energy system in ways that would be compatible with the greenhouse gas reductions targets while also increasing competitiveness and security of supply. To achieve these goals, the Roadmap states that significant investments need to be made in new low-carbon technologies, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and grid infrastructure. Four main routes are identified to achieve a more sustainable, competitive and secure energy system in 2050: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy efficiency; • Renewable energy; • Nuclear energy; and |

| Policy Document | Summary |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carbon capture and storage. <p>The Roadmap combined these routes in different ways to create and analyse seven possible scenarios for 2050. The analysis found that decarbonising the energy system is technically and economically feasible. Each of the scenarios assumes in the analysis that increasing the share of renewable energy and using energy more efficiently are crucial, irrespective of the particular energy mix chosen. An important component of this energy mix is grid infrastructure, with the Roadmap stating:</p> <p>“With electricity trade and renewables’ penetration growing under almost any scenario up to 2050, and particularly in the high renewables scenario, adequate infrastructure at distribution, interconnection and long-distance transmission becomes a matter of urgency. By 2020 interconnection capacity needs to expand at least in line with current development plans. An overall increase of interconnection capacity by 40% up to 2020 will be needed, with further integration after this point.”</p> |

Table 2: Detailed National Policy Appraisal

| Policy Document | Summary |
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| Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF) | <p>Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework (hereafter referred to as the NPF) is the Government’s high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland to the year 2040 and marks the highest tier of Ireland’s spatial plans. The National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), the main policy principles of the NPF, support and strengthen the economy and a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient society (NSO 3, 6 and 8), provide access to quality services (4, 7, and 10) and achieve sustainable growth of settlements and manage environmental resources (NSO 1 and 9). The NPF states that Ireland’s National Energy Policy is focused on three pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability; • Security of Supply; and • Competitiveness. <p>In line with these principles, NSO 8: ‘Transition to Sustainable Energy’ notes that in creating Ireland’s future energy landscape, new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary to enable a more distributed energy generation system which connects established and emerging energy sources to the major sources of demand. NSO 8 aims to “Reinforce the distribution and transmission network to facilitate planned growth and distribution of a more renewables focused source of energy across the major demand centres” (p. 147). In addition, it contains, in National Policy Objective 42, the following commitment to transmission network reinforcement: “to support, within the context of the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA) and its successors, the progressive development of Ireland’s offshore renewable energy potential, including domestic and international grid connectivity enhancements” (p. 104).</p> <p>County Meath and Fingal, North County Dublin are located in the Mid-East Region as set out within the NPF, which states that, “The Mid-East has experienced high levels of population growth in recent decades, at more than twice the national growth rate. Managing the challenges of future growth is critical to this regional area. A more balanced and sustainable pattern of development, with a greater focus on addressing employment creation, local infrastructure needs and addressing the legacy of rapid growth, must be prioritised.” (p.33)</p> |
| The National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030 | <p>The NDP is the national capital investment strategy plan that is integrated and aligned with the NPF. Its sets out the framework of expenditure commitments to secure the Strategic Investment Priorities to the year 2030 and supports the delivery of the ten NSOs identified in the NPF. One of the core strategic investment priorities identified within the NDP, is a focus on decarbonizing energy, stating: ‘We need to plan our energy system as a whole to create greater links between different energy carriers (such as electricity and hydrogen); infrastructures; and consumption sectors (such as transport and heating). The long-term objective is to transition to a net-zero carbon, reliable, secure, flexible and resource-efficient energy services at the least possible cost for society by mid-century.’ (p.123)</p> <p>The NDP states that doing so requires a coordinated programme of investment in, among other things, ‘an expanded and strengthened electricity transmission and distribution network’ (p.123), in order to support an increase in both renewable and conventional electricity generation.</p> <p>The NDP provides for the collaboration in the energy sector, driven by the single electricity market. The need for a new interconnector between the electricity grids of Northern Ireland and Ireland has been identified by the Irish Government and Northern Ireland Executive as a project of common interest. Ireland is also working with other countries such as France to explore potential for electricity interconnection and will continue to support relationships with our European neighbours to enhance our international connectivity.</p> <p>The ‘Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure’ of 2012 recognises the importance of the need for the upgrading and development of the electricity network to meet existing and future energy demands by fully supporting EirGrid’s ‘Grid 25 Programme’ and the investment required. Within the Policy statement the Government “endorses the major investment underway in the high voltage electricity transmission system under EirGrid’s Grid 25 Programme.” It states, “Grid 25 is the most important investment in Ireland’s transmission system for several generations and will position our energy system for decades to come” (p.1).</p> |
| National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030 | <p>The National Energy and Climate Plan (hereafter referred to as the NECP) is a ten-year plan mandated by the EU to each of its member states, in order for the EU to meet its overall greenhouse gas emissions targets. The plan establishes key measures to address the five dimensions of the EU Energy Union: decarbonisation, energy efficiency, energy security, internal energy markets and research, innovation and competitiveness.</p> <p>The NECP takes into account energy and climate policies developed to date, the levels of demographic and economic growth identified in the NPF and includes all of the climate and energy measures set out in the NDP.</p> |
| Government White Paper – Ireland’s Transition to a | <p>The Government White Paper sets out a framework to guide Ireland’s energy policy development. The White Paper acknowledges that an uninterrupted supply of energy is vital to the functioning of Irish society and economy. It establishes the need for the ‘development and renewal’ of energy networks to meet</p> |

| Policy Document | Summary |
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| Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030 | economic and social goals. The Proposed Development is considered to be an 'enhanced and extended energy infrastructure' development, which will be critical for economic development, regional development and the secure provision of energy and other services for the Irish society and economy. |
| Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2023 & 2024 | <p>The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act was published in 2021 and commits to achieving 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting Ireland on a path to reach net-zero by no later than 2050. Climate Action Plan 2021 aimed to increase the proportion of renewable electricity to up to 80% by 2030.</p> <p>The decarbonisation pathway for the electricity sector is challenging given the rapid growth in demand for power, as well as the need to ensure security of supply through the decarbonisation journey.</p> <p>The Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) is the third annual update to Ireland's Climate Action 2019 with the aim of reaching net zero no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government. The CAP24 builds on the measures and actions identified in the Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23), setting out how Ireland can accelerate the actions that are required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development.</p> <p>Under 'Key Messages' for the Electricity Sector, the CAP24 states (Page 147):</p> <p>"The deployment rates of renewable energy and grid infrastructure required to meet the carbon budget programme for electricity is unprecedented and requires urgent action across all actors to align with the national targets".</p> <p>The CAP24 reiterates the following measures relevant to the Proposed Development to meet the required emission reductions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To reach 80% of electricity demand from renewable sources; ▪ Target 6 GW of onshore wind and up to 5GW of solar by 2025; and ▪ Target 9 GW onshore wind, 8 GW solar, and at least 5 GW of offshore wind by 2030 <p>CAP24 acknowledges that infrastructural actions would first be needed, for example, to reinforce and transform the electricity grid and that these actions would have a less immediate impact on sector emissions but would facilitate increasing emissions reductions in the longer term.</p> <p>EirGrid has delivered on the CAP23 measure to update our Shaping Our Electricity Future pathway to align with CAP23 and the carbon budget programme. The update was published in July 2023.</p> |