



**Approach to the
Development of Electricity
Transmission Lines**

Approach to the Development of Electricity Transmission Infrastructure

What is EirGrid?

EirGrid is a state-owned company that is responsible for operating and developing the electricity transmission grid in Ireland for the benefit of electricity consumers.

It is putting in place the grid infrastructure required to support competition in the supply of electricity, to assist economic growth and to meet Government targets for the generation of renewable energy.

The Grid

The transmission grid refers to the network of higher-voltage electricity infrastructure on the island, comprising overhead lines, underground cables and substations.

The grid provides the vital link between generators of electricity and its users, ensuring that adequate electricity is provided to power homes, farms and industry.

A grid that is safe, secure, reliable and economical is a key factor in Ireland's ability to attract and retain jobs.

Further development and reinforcement of the grid is required to ensure that all enterprises, from large corporations to small businesses, continue to provide jobs in Ireland.

Over the next 15 to 20 years, there will be major improvements and enhancements to the grid. This is being driven by a number of factors, including

- Harnessing of wind and other renewable energy sources
- Increasing competition in the electricity market
- Reinforcing the grid to meet future demand
- Further interconnection to UK and European grids

Grid25

Grid25 is EirGrid's strategic response to these challenges.

It is a strategy that involves significant improvement to, and reinforcement of, the electricity grid. Over the course of the programme, approximately €3.2 billion will be invested in the planning and development of a broad range of electricity transmission projects throughout the country.

Approach to Developing Large Transmission Projects

The purpose of this document is to provide information as to how we progress our large-scale transmission infrastructure projects over a number of key stages - through the public planning process, to construction and eventual operation.



There are opportunities for engaging with EirGrid throughout these stages, helping inform decisions with regard to the nature, extent and location of our projects.

While this overview is intended to give general guidance to our stakeholders in relation to the development of transmission projects, it must be understood that all projects are different and there is no “one size fits all” process.

As such, while we always seek to develop large-scale projects in line with this approach, in some instances, because of the nature and size of the project, there may be a requirement to deviate from this process. In such circumstances we will explain the reasons for any deviation.

However, our structured framework ensures that planning, environmental and community issues are identified and addressed from the earliest stage, helping EirGrid make fully-informed decisions during the development of a project.

Project Development & Consultation

For our larger projects, EirGrid seeks to follow a structured framework of project development that provides a clear and transparent process to all stakeholders.

We seek to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including

- Landowners
- Local Communities and the General Public
- Business Organisations
- Statutory Bodies
- Public Representatives

Central to this is ensuring that stakeholders are included in the ongoing development of such projects.

We have identified five key stages of project development - four of which are undertaken prior to the lodgement of an application for statutory consent.

Wayleaving and construction of the grid infrastructure, if consented, is undertaken during the fifth stage.

Consultation and engagement are significant elements of EirGrid’s project development framework. Through all stages of the process, we endeavour to keep the public, and other stakeholders, informed about the project, providing opportunities for input and feedback.

The need for the project is kept under review throughout its progression towards the statutory consent process.

EirGrid's

Project Development Roadmap

The Public's Role in the Development of Projects

The public is an important stakeholder in our projects and can play a crucial role from the earliest stages of project development, for example by making us aware of local constraints that may affect the siting or routeing of a project.

EirGrid always considers this information and endeavours to avoid, limit or mitigate any impact on identified constraints. The final project proposal involves a careful balance between the identified need for the project and technical, environmental, economic and social issues.

EirGrid seeks to engage with people who may be affected by the planned transmission infrastructure - from the earliest stage of project development through to project completion.

Engagement with stakeholders can take a variety of forms, such as open days, meetings and written correspondence, depending on the nature and extent of the project.

As the project develops up to submission of a planning application, the public, local communities, individuals, and others, will have regular opportunities to review and provide input into the issues and options we are considering.

Following submission of a planning application for a proposed development, the public will be provided with an opportunity to make a formal written submission to the decision-making authority – normally An Bord Pleanála.

For some projects, a public Oral Hearing will be held by An Bord Pleanála, which allows a further opportunity for issues to be voiced and addressed.

EirGrid's framework for project development and consultation is set out graphically on the opposite page.

- **Stage One:**
Information Gathering
- **Stage Two:**
Evaluate Options
- **Stage Three:**
Confirm Design
- **Stage Four:**
Prepare Planning Application
- **Stage Five:**
Wayleaving and Construction



Project Development & Consultation Roadmap

 <p>STAGE 1</p> <p>Information Gathering</p> <p>Identify Project Study Area</p> <p>Identify environmental & other constraints</p> <p>Identify feasible options (corridor/sites)</p> <p>Publication of Stage 1 Report</p> <p>Pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála</p> 	 <p>STAGE 2</p> <p>Evaluate Options</p> <p>Consideration of all feedback from Stage 1</p> <p>Identification of EirGrid's emerging preferred option (route corridor/site)</p> <p>Identification of indicative line within corridor or site boundary</p> <p>Identify and meet landowners of indicative line/site; initial survey</p> <p>Publication of Stage 2 Report</p> <p>Pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála</p> 	 <p>STAGE 3</p> <p>Confirm Design</p> <p>Consideration of all feedback from Stage 2</p> <p>Conduct environmental studies and surveys</p> <p>Confirmation of design of line/site proposal including construction methodology</p> <p>Ongoing engagement with landowners on preferred line route or site</p> <p>Pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála</p> 	 <p>STAGE 4</p> <p>Prepare Planning Application</p> <p>Complete reports and prepare planning application</p> <p>Preparation of Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Report as required</p> <p>Conclusion of Pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála</p> <p>Submit application to An Bord Pleanála</p> 	 <p>STAGE 5</p> <p>Wayleaving and Construction</p> <p>Preparation of construction plans</p> <p>Serve wayleave notice to landowners and agree access for construction</p> <p>Commence construction</p> 
<p>Public</p> <p>Public and stakeholder consultation on study area and constraints</p> <p>Public and stakeholder consultation on findings of Stage 1 Report</p>	<p>Public</p> <p>Public and stakeholder consultation on findings of Stage 2 Report</p>	<p>Public</p> <p>Ongoing public information</p>	<p>Public</p> <p>Ongoing public information</p> <p>Once application submitted, public can make submissions to An Bord Pleanála including at an oral hearing, if held</p>	<p>Public</p> <p>Ongoing public information</p> <p>Evaluation of Public Consultation process</p>

Stage One: Information Gathering

STAGE

1

Having identified the technical need for new or enhanced grid infrastructure, EirGrid begins the process of gathering technical, environmental and other information regarding the project.

This stage does not involve making binding decisions regarding the detailed nature, extent and location of the project, but simply gathering as much information as possible to ensure a balanced and robust outcome later in the process.

The focus at this stage is primarily on gathering environmental, social, technical and other information to inform and shape the project.

A broad study area is defined in which the project is likely to be located. Within this study area, environmentally sensitive areas and other constraints are identified and mapped; these include designated or protected landscapes (Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Natural Heritage Areas), protected views, villages, towns and other areas of scenic, amenity, ecological and cultural value.

The principal objective is to avoid these environmental and other constraints.

Public/Stakeholder Input

At this stage of the project we commence engagement with the local communities and the general public within the identified study area of the project. We invite public and

stakeholder comment and feedback on published documentation - regarding the identified study area, the identified constraints therein and on identified potential corridor and site options.

Stage One is the first real opportunity for public input in respect of a project. It is extremely useful for the public to engage with, and provide local knowledge to EirGrid at this early stage, where no decisions have been made, and where there is considerable scope to influence the ongoing development of the project, by identifying what considerations should inform our judgements

Stage One Report

A Stage One Report is prepared by EirGrid, which sets out the need for the project, identifies the broad study area, and presents the information gathered to date. Consultants generally identify a number of identified potential options - indicative corridors or site locations - and what is considered at this stage to be the least constrained of these options to meet the need for the project. We make this report available to the public and other stakeholders, and invite feedback on its content, and issues arising.



STAGE 1

Information Gathering

- Identify Project Study Area
- Identify environmental & other constraints

Identify feasible options (corridor/sites)

Publication of Stage 1 Report

Pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála

Output

- Explanation of project need
- Identification of Study Area
- Identification of environmental and other constraints
- Identification of potential route corridors and/or site locations, including considered least constrained option or options
- Publication of Stage One Report for public consultation and feedback



Public

Public and stakeholder consultation on study area and constraints

Public and stakeholder consultation on findings of Stage 1 Report

Stage Two: Evaluate Options

STAGE

2

Stage Two is where decisions begin to be made and endorsed by EirGrid regarding the detailed nature, extent and location of the proposed development.

We consider all feedback from public and stakeholder consultation obtained during Stage One, and use this, as well as our ongoing technical, environmental and other studies, to make informed decisions regarding potential project options.

This may include modifications to an option, or indeed the identification of other options, to meet the needs of the project. There remains scope for ongoing public and stakeholder input and feedback to influence decisions.

Evaluation of Options

The results of ongoing consultation, together with technical, environmental and other studies carried out to this point, are used to identify what EirGrid considers to comprise the emerging preferred option – generally being the best option from a technical, environmental, community and economic perspective. This ensures a structured approach to determining overall preferences among alternative options.

This stage includes identification of the detail of the project proposal – for example identification of an indicative line route within the emerging preferred corridor, or the indicative site for a substation.

Public /Stakeholder Input

Ongoing public and stakeholder engagement will occur throughout Stage Two in order both to inform the general public about the project and to request further feedback from stakeholders.

This stage also involves identification of, and early engagement with landowners along the identified indicative line route or at the identified indicative substation site.

During Stage Two, we also begin pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála (or the relevant planning authority as appropriate) in accordance with the governing Planning and Development Acts.

Stage Two Report

At the end of Stage Two, we will produce a Stage Two Report which summarises feedback received to date. The report identifies any local or wider modifications to potential options and the emerging preferred (least constrained) option following the evaluation process, plus the indicative proposal (line route or substation). This will allow stakeholders to see how and where we have made decisions and the basis upon which we have done so.

As before, we will invite public and stakeholder input and feedback in respect of the Stage Two Report, so it should not be considered that a final decision on these matters has been made at this stage of project development.

STAGE 2

Evaluate Options

Consideration of all feedback from
Stage 1

Identification of EirGrid's emerging preferred option (route corridor/site)

Identification of indicative line within corridor or site boundary

Identify and meet landowners of indicative line/site; initial survey

Publication of **Stage 2 Report**

Pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála

Public

Public and stakeholder consultation on findings of **Stage 2 Report**

Output

- Review and consider all feedback arising in respect of the Stage One Report
- Modify options where appropriate including rationale for making such changes
- Identification of an emerging preferred (least constrained) option, following a multi-criteria evaluation process
- Identification of indicative detailed proposal (line route or substation), following initial landowner engagement and ongoing consultation
- Publication of Stage Two Report for public consultation and feedback



Stage Three: Confirm Design

STAGE

This stage usually occurs in parallel with Stage Four. In this stage, feedback from stakeholders from Stage Two informs the decisions being made by EirGrid with regard to the specific nature, extent and location of the project. EirGrid and its agents will seek to engage with all landowners on the identified proposed route and/or station sites, in order to ensure that any concerns or matters regarding siting of the proposed infrastructure are addressed.

The focus is on land and site-specific technical and environmental surveys and assessment. There is a shift in emphasis from public and stakeholder consultation and feedback to information-giving.

Preferred Option (Route/Site)

As a result of all the information gathering, technical and environmental studies, and public, stakeholder and landowner consultation and engagement that has been carried out up to this stage, the preferred option is identified. We continue to refine the preferred option in consultation with landowners and other stakeholders, and in the context of ongoing studies and assessment, to minimise the potential impact on the receiving human and natural environment. We complete the preliminary design of the proposed development as it is evolving, including identification of the specific location of the alignment, site and associated structures.

Environmental Assessment

We will carry out a comprehensive environmental assessment on the preferred option and will

consult with key statutory and non-statutory stakeholders (primarily government departments, statutory bodies and agencies) on the scope of this assessment. An Environmental Report (ER) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be submitted as part of the application.

Where a proposed development has the potential to impact upon a designated Natura 2000 site – a site designated under the European Birds and Habitats Directives – we will undertake a screening for Appropriate Assessment in accordance with the requirements of the governing legislation. Depending on the results of this screening, we will prepare a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) which will also be submitted as part of the application.

Public/Stakeholder Input

We continue to update our stakeholders during the process of confirming the design of the proposed development. In particular, we will continue to engage with landowners who are directly affected by the project, as well as with the relevant planning authority. The public and stakeholders will continue to be informed of project progress, and further feedback and input in respect of the project is always welcomed. We will continue to publish factual reports and updates concerning the project on our project website (www.eirgrid.com/projects).

However, at this stage of project development, where there is less opportunity to influence decisions, the emphasis is more on sharing information with the public and stakeholders, for example on project progress, than on seeking new public and stakeholder feedback and input.



STAGE 3

Confirm Design

Consideration of all feedback from **Stage 2**

Conduct environmental studies and surveys

Confirmation of design of line/site proposal including construction methodology

Ongoing engagement with landowners on preferred line route or site

Pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála

Output

- Identify preferred project option and the nature, extent and location of proposed development
- Undertake environmental assessment of proposed development (including Appropriate Assessment if required), in accordance with Irish legislation and European Directives
- Ongoing public and stakeholder involvement, primarily by means of information-giving
- Ongoing landowner engagement



Public

Ongoing public information

Stage Four: Prepare Planning Application

STAGE

4

Stage Four usually occurs in parallel with Stage Three. In this stage, we are preparing the documents, maps and drawings, and other particulars to submit as a planning application.

Once the application has been submitted, the project is in a formal application process. The consenting authority (either An Bord Pleanála or the relevant planning authority, depending on the nature of the application, as confirmed by An Bord Pleanála) will facilitate public input, initially by means of written submission.

At its discretion, An Bord Pleanála may hold an oral hearing in respect of the proposed development. As such, the application process also ensures considerable public participation.

Stage Four will conclude with a decision by the consenting authority in respect of the proposed development.

Public and Stakeholder Consultation

In addition to any informal update or information provided by EirGrid, the public will be formally notified when the application is lodged through a public notice in the newspaper.

The project website will also be updated once the planning application is lodged and we will direct

the public to where they can make a submission to the consenting authority during its formal public consultation period.

If the application is submitted to An Bord Pleanála, it will require EirGrid to provide a dedicated website, containing the full planning application, to allow the public and other parties to view the application online.

Oral Hearing

At the discretion of An Bord Pleanála, an oral hearing will be undertaken under its chairmanship in the region in which the project is proposed. We will fully engage in any oral hearing and will provide all relevant information to allow the Bord to make an informed decision.

Planning Decision

On concluding the planning process the consenting authority will issue its decision and will either issue one of three decisions.

1. Decision to Grant Permission.
2. Decision to Grant Permission, subject to conditions which have to be complied with.
3. Decision not to Grant Permission.

STAGE 4

Prepare Planning Application

Complete reports and prepare planning application

Preparation of Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Report as required

Conclusion of Pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála

Submit application to An Bord Pleanála

Output

- Preparation of application documents, including environmental assessment
- Submission of application to the appropriate planning authority or An Bord Pleanála
- Publication of application documents on a dedicated applications website
- Updating of separate EirGrid project website
- Ongoing input throughout applications process as required
- Ultimate decision of An Bord Pleanála or Planning Authority



Public

Ongoing public information

Public can make submissions to An Bord Pleanála once application submitted

Stage Five: Wayleaving and Construction

STAGE

5

Assuming that an application for a proposed development has been successful and has been consented, construction plans will be developed. Wayleave notices will be issued to landowners for access to land to enable construction to proceed.

Subsequent to obtaining landowner permission, EirGrid will inform ESB Networks of the successful issuance of wayleaves. ESB Networks will undertake the actual construction of the transmission infrastructure and the resulting energisation of the project.

Public and Stakeholder Consultation

We will continue to engage with landowners who are directly affected by the project with a view to agreeing access for constructing the permitted development.





**STAGE
5**

**Wayleaving
and
Construction**

Preparation of construction plans

Serve wayleave notice to landowners and agree access for construction

Commence construction

Output

- Implementation of permitted development
- Preparation of detailed construction plans
- Construction of the permitted development
- Energisation and operation of the new transmission infrastructure
- Ongoing communications and liaison with landowners, and as appropriate, local communities and the general public



Public

Ongoing public information

Evaluation of Public Consultation process

EirGrid is a wholly owned State company which is responsible for operating and developing the electricity transmission grid in Ireland. The electricity grid or “grid” is the backbone of the electricity network in Ireland. The grid provides the vital link between generators of electricity and its users. The grid ensures that adequate electricity is provided, to all users in Ireland, to power homes, farms and industry.

We seek public input in respect of projects, including local knowledge views as to what considerations should inform our judgements, based on what is considered to be important to local stakeholders.

Major changes to Ireland’s electricity industry will be driven by the harnessing of wind and other renewable energy sources, increased competition in the supply of electricity, a requirement to reinforce the existing grid to meet anticipated future demand and further interconnection to UK and European grids.



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