

Celtic Interconnector



Volume 2B

Public and Landowner Consultation Report

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1 Introduction and Overview

1.1 Purpose of Report

This Volume 2B Public and Landowner Consultation Report has been prepared to accompany a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) planning application, and a Project of Common Interest (PCI) Application file, made by EirGrid plc (EirGrid) to An Bord Pleanála (the Board) in respect of that portion of the overall proposed Celtic Interconnector project located in Ireland.

The purpose of this report is to document the extent and nature of public, stakeholder and landowner consultation and participation that has taken place in Ireland over the course of the project's development. This report demonstrates that EirGrid has endeavoured to ensure the widest possible access by the public, stakeholder and landowners to information about the project at all stages of its pre-planning development.

In this regard, it is considered that the consultation undertaken in respect of the Celtic Interconnector fully meets the requirements of the Aarhus Convention, Codified EIA Directive and Irish national legislation.

1.2 Introduction to EirGrid

EirGrid is the Irish electricity Transmission System Operator (TSO), responsible for ensuring a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity, now and in the future.

EirGrid develops, manages and operates the electricity transmission grid. This brings power from where it is generated to where it is needed throughout Ireland. The grid supplies power to industry and businesses that use large amounts of electricity. The grid also powers the distribution network. This supplies the electricity used every day in homes, businesses, schools, hospitals and farms.

EirGrid is also mandated to explore and develop opportunities to interconnect the transmission grid with the transmission grids in other countries. In 2011 EirGrid completed the East West Interconnector, a 500 MW high-voltage connection between Ireland and mainland Great Britain. The North South Interconnector between Northern Ireland and Ireland is currently under development

In addition, Ireland has an existing privately-owned and operated 500 MW interconnector linking Co. Antrim in Northern Ireland to Scotland. Furthermore, a proposed privately-owned interconnector is planned to link the South East of the country to Wales.

1.3 The Celtic Interconnector

The Celtic Interconnector is a proposed link between the Irish and the French electricity grids. It is being jointly developed by EirGrid and the French TSO, Réseau de Transport d'Électricité (RTE). When completed it will enable the movement of electricity between Ireland and France, and vice versa, and will be Ireland's sole interconnection with the European Union, following the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

The Celtic Interconnector consists of a proposed High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) 700 megawatt (MW) connection between the 400 kV substation at La Martyre (Finistère, France) and the existing 220 kV substation at Knockraha (Co. Cork, Ireland). The total cable length is approximately 575km, of which approximately 500km is subsea.

This project has been subject to collaboration and cooperation between the two project partners for many years, with a commitment from the outset to develop the project in close consultation and engagement with the many stakeholders involved.

As outlined in more detail in Volume 2A (Planning Report) of the application particulars, the Celtic Interconnector was designated in 2013 as a Project of Common Interest (PCI) for the North Seas Countries Offshore Grid Initiative ('NSCOGI') priority corridor under the TEN-E Regulation¹. The TEN-E Regulation seeks to modernise and expand Europe's energy infrastructure and to interconnect networks across borders to meet the European Union's core energy policy objectives of competitiveness, sustainability and security of supply. The project has retained its PCI designation during subsequent reviews on a bi-annual basis since 2013 and most recently in 2019.

The European Commission sees increased interconnection as a key step towards achieving a more integrated electricity system and, as a designated PCI, considers the Celtic Interconnector to be an important contributor to achieving such integration.

As also outlined in more detail in Volume 2A of the application particulars, the Irish Programme for Government states the Government's support for the Celtic Interconnector, which in addition to connecting Ireland to Europe's energy grid will also facilitate increased competition in the electricity market, enhance security of supply and help Ireland to reach its goal of sourcing at least 70% of electricity from renewable sources by 2030. This is a cornerstone of the Government's plans to meet Ireland's future climate commitments and the key driver behind EirGrid's corporate strategy.

¹ Regulation (EU) No. 347/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2013 on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure and repealing Decision No. 1364/2006/EC and amending Regulations (EC) No 713/2009, (EC) No 714/2009 and (EC) No 715/2009. The TEN-E Regulation can be accessed at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013R0347>

2 Context for Public, Stakeholder and Landowner Engagement

2.1 Public and Landowner Engagement in Context

EirGrid is committed to public and landowner engagement as an integral part of its project development process. This approach is informed by national and European requirements and enhanced by EirGrid's organisational commitment to best practice in this area.

Throughout the project development process for the Celtic Interconnector, EirGrid has consulted with National, regional and local stakeholders, communities, landowners, and members of the public concerned, all in accordance with legislative and formal Guideline requirements for best practice, including:

- The Aarhus Convention
- Project of Common Interest
- The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive
- Irish legislation

2.2 The Aarhus Convention²

The Aarhus Convention is an international treaty which both the EU and Ireland signed up to in 1998. More specifically, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters was adopted on 25th June 1998 at the Fourth Ministerial Conference as part of the "Environment for Europe" process.

The EU ratified the Aarhus Convention in February 2005. Ireland ratified the Convention in June 2012. Prior to ratification, Ireland had fully implemented the provisions of the Aarhus Convention and the related EU Directives, Directive 2003/4/EC on Public Access to Environmental Information and Directive 2003/35/EC on Public Participation,

The Aarhus Convention lays down a set of basic rules to promote citizens' involvement in environmental matters and improve enforcement of environmental law. The Aarhus Convention comprises three pillars:

- Access to environmental information,
- Participation in the environmental decision-making process, and
- Access to justice in environmental matters.

² The Aarhus Convention was adopted in Aarhus, Denmark on 25 June 1998. It entered into force on 30 October 2001. The European Union became a signatory and a Party to the Convention in 1998 and since 2005 it has applied to all EU Institutions. By April 2013 there were 45 countries Parties to the Convention, plus the European Union.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) document, *The Aarhus Convention: An Implementation Guide* (Second Edition, 2014) represents best practice in respect of how to consult with members of the public on major projects. This document was central to the consultation process developed by EirGrid in 2017 and applied by the Celtic Interconnector project (please refer to EirGrid's Six-Step Grid Development Process in Section 2.7 below).

2.3 Projects of Common Interest (PCIs)

Projects of Common Interest (PCIs) are key cross-border infrastructure projects that link the energy systems of EU countries. They are intended to help the EU achieve its energy policy and climate objectives: affordable, secure and sustainable energy for all citizens, and the long-term decarbonisation of the economy in accordance with the Paris Agreement³.

The regulations regarding designation of PCIs were adopted on 21st March 2013 and entered into force on 1st June 2013. Under Article 3(4) of the Regulation, the European Commission is empowered to adopt delegated acts to establish the union list of PCIs. This list forms an Annex to the Regulation.

The Commission Delegated Regulation 1391/2013, issued on the 14th October 2013, identified the projects forming part of the first union list of PCIs⁴ which included the Celtic Interconnector in the Annex to the Delegated Regulation under the heading "1. Priority electricity corridor Northern Seas offshore grid ('NSOG')"⁵.

As a PCI, and without prejudice to any requirements under the Aarhus and Espoo Conventions and relevant Union law, all parties involved in the permit granting process for a PCI project are obliged to follow the principles for public participation set out in the Guidelines in Article 9 of the TEN-E Regulation, and specifically Annex VI(3) thereof. EirGrid's activities to fulfil these needs are detailed in a Concept for Public Participation document shared with and accepted by the PCI Competent Authority in Ireland in July 2020 – see Section 2.4 below.

2.4 Concept for Public Participation (CPP)

The Concept for Public Participation (CPP) document sets out the public participation measures for the Celtic Interconnector project's permit granting and public participation phase in Ireland in reference to, and in accordance with, the PCI requirements. It should be noted that this CPP applied to the PCI project in Ireland - the public participation

³ The Paris Agreement is a **legally binding international treaty on climate change**. It was adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016. It can be accessed at: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/international/negotiations/paris_en

⁴ TEN-E Regulation

⁵ "1.6 PCI France – Ireland interconnection between La Martyre (FR) and Great Island or Knockraha (IE)"

measures relating to the overall Celtic Interconnector project in the UK and France are detailed by way of separate CPPs for those jurisdictions.

In fulfilment of the requirements of Article 9(3) and Annex VI of the TEN-E Regulation, the CPP sets out the necessary information and measures that EirGrid has undertaken prior to the submission of the CPP, and further planned public consultation on the project in Ireland in order to ensure a high level of public participation in the project.

Under the TEN-E Regulation, EirGrid was required to submit a CPP to An Bord Pleanála (as competent authority for PCI in Ireland), and this was done on 24th April 2020. An Bord Pleanála approved the CPP on 6th July 2020. A copy of the CPP is available on the EirGrid's project specific [website](#)⁶.

Article 9(4) of the TEN-E Regulation states that:

"The project promoter shall prepare a report summarising the results of activities related to the participation of the public prior to the submission of the application file, including those activities that took place before the start of the permit granting process. The project promoter shall submit that report together with the application file to the competent authority. Due account shall be taken of these results in a comprehensive decision".

This Report satisfies the requirements of Article 9(4).

2.5 The EIA Directive

As a member of the EU, Ireland has been obliged to comply with the EIA Directive since 2005. Under the EIA Directive 2011/98/EU, it is necessary to carry out an assessment of the likely impacts of a project on human beings.

The EIA Directive 2014/52/EU amended the provisions of the EIA Directive 2011/98/EU. The amendments that were introduced to the text of the EIA Directive reflect the Aarhus Convention public participation requirements. For example, the definitions of 'the public' and 'the public concerned'⁷ as set out in Articles 2(4) and 2(5) of the Aarhus Convention are incorporated into the EIA Directive 2014/52/EU by Articles 1(2)(d) and (e), respectively. In addition, amendments made to Article 6 of the EIA Directive set out the minimum requirements for effective public participation.

The aim of Articles 6(2) and 6(3) of the Directive is to ensure that the public will be informed of matters early in the environmental decision-making procedure, and that the relevant information and documents are made available to the public concerned. This

⁶ <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Celtic-Interconnector-Project-Concept-for-Public-Participation-EirGrid-2020.pdf>
<http://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Celtic-Interconnector-Project-Concept-for-Public-Participation-EirGrid-2020.pdf>

⁷ The 'public concerned' means the public affected or likely to be affected by, or having an interest in, the environmental decision-making; for the purposes of this definition non-governmental organisations promoting environmental protection and meeting any requirements under national law shall be deemed to have an interest.

Commented [A1]: A copy of same can be included in the Final Application File. The entire contents of Appendix C is already publically available.

includes making information available electronically as well as by public notices or by other appropriate means.

The substantive provisions ensure that the public concerned will be given “*early and effective opportunities to participate*” in environmental decision-making procedures for consent to projects and, for that purpose, the public concerned is entitled to express comments and opinions when all options are open to the competent authority, before the decision on the request for development consent is taken.

2.6 National Law and Best Practice

As a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID), prospective applicants must enter the pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála in relation to a proposed development, as stipulated under Section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). In this process, the Board can advise the prospective applicants, and gather information and clarifications as the development matures.

EirGrid attended a number of such pre-application consultation meetings with the Strategic Infrastructure division of the Board.

The requirements of the Public Participation Directive (2003/35/EC) in relation to applications for development consent for proposed electricity transmission projects are reflected in Irish law by, *inter alia*, section 182A(4) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as inserted, and Article 212 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001, as amended. These provisions require a notice of the nature and location of the proposed development to be published and prescribe the contents of such notice, which include an invitation for submissions and observations to be made to the Board relating to:

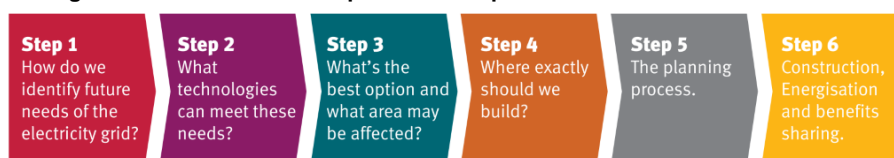
- The implications of the proposed development for proper planning and sustainable development in the area or areas concerned; and,
- The likely effects on the environment or adverse effects on the integrity of a European site, as the case may be, of the proposed development.

This is provided for in the application particulars and the SID application process.

2.7 EirGrid's Six-Step Grid Development Process

In reference to the provisions of the TEN-E Regulation and the Aarhus Convention, and in compliance with industry best practice, EirGrid has developed a six-step approach to public participation and stakeholder engagement in the development of its projects.

Figure 2.1: EirGrid's Six-Step Grid Development Process



Source: EirGrid

This approach is based upon values of honesty, social responsibility and integrity. EirGrid undertakes to ensure that our consulting process:

- Communicates proposals clearly in an understandable way, both online and on paper (using Plain English);
- Allows sufficient time for respondents to consider information and provide comment,
- Ensures that anyone who wishes to comment is able to do so;
- Provides clear opportunities to engage with EirGrid;
- Provides an explanation of the decisions that are made;
- Communicates with everyone who has engaged with EirGrid and provides feedback on how their feedback was considered, as well as the outcome of our decision;
- And that EirGrid staff treat everyone on every project with honesty and respect; and,
- This approach is intended to deliver open and transparent engagement and consultation with EirGrid's stakeholders and communities.

2.7.1 EirGrid's approach to engagement

EirGrid's approach to engagement is tailored to suit a particular project or initiative. A bespoke engagement plan is used for each key project or initiative, identifying the channels to be used to provide information and notification to the stakeholders and facilitating the evolution of these methods as the project develops. These methods can include email contact, project brochures and updates, targeted social media content, advertising in local and national press, letters to landowners and statutory bodies, providing spokespeople for discussions on public radio, providing phone lines and conducting webinars.

The process also typically includes promotion in public locations and open days in the local area where members of the public can meet the experts and have their queries

addressed. Stakeholders are invited to provide feedback in multiple formats including feedback forms online and at open days, through fora and webinars and by email or letter. Stakeholders can also engage directly with Community Liaison and Agricultural Liaison Officers.

As illustrated by Figure 2.1 above, Step 1 to Step 4 of a project's development is the period when EirGrid proactively engages and consults with all stakeholders to develop informed decisions. Step 5 aligns with the planning process for an SID application to An Bord Pleanála. As per the requirements of Section 182A(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, EirGrid is required to inform the public of the intention to lodge the application and detail how submissions can be raised on the application.

All of the public engagement documentation published to date is available on EirGrid's project specific website for the Celtic Interconnector project⁸ – please refer to Appendix C which sets out the contents of this website. EirGrid continues to engage and inform the public and stakeholders during Step 5 through their project specific website.

The ".eu website" for the project (<https://www.celticinterconnector.eu/>) (see Section 8.2.1) also facilitates the provision of international communications regarding the project. In addition, a dedicated SID project website is created for the SID planning application. EirGrid will continue to consult and engage with project stakeholders throughout the planning application process, and subsequently throughout the construction phase (Step 6), to ensure that any impacts to local communities during construction are minimised as far as possible.

Commented [A2]: SID website address TBC for Final Application File

2.7.2 Receipt of Irish Planning Institute Award 2018 for the Six-Step Process

In February 2018, EirGrid received an Award from the IPI in the 'Participation and Engagement' category for the Six-Step Process. While winning this award demonstrates that the process is highly regarded by industry, it was developed in order to set out EirGrid's desire to develop the national grid in a transparent and inclusive manner with communities and stakeholders.

2.7.3 The Impact of COVID-19

In 2020, the required public response to COVID-19 saw limitations placed on EirGrid's teams in their ability to engage face to face with stakeholders. In response other online methods were added to the toolkit for engagement, including online meetings and public webinars. Printed media advertisements were also taken out in local and national press in May 2020 and again in November 2020, and replicated on social media platforms in

⁸ <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/the-grid/projects/celtic-interconnector/related-documents/>

order to maintain public awareness of the project and invite direct contact from stakeholders⁹.

2.8 Project's Receipt of the '2020 Renewables Grid Initiative Good Practice of the Year Award' for Communication and Engagement

In 2020 the Celtic Interconnector project received the Renewables Grid Initiative (RGI) Good Practice Award in the Communication and Engagement category. Figure 2.2 was taken the day that the CEO of EirGrid accepted this award.

The Renewables Grid Initiative (RGI) is a unique collaboration of NGOs and TSOs from across Europe united to promote fair, transparent, sustainable grid development to enable the growth of renewables and to achieve full decarbonisation in line with the Paris Agreement.

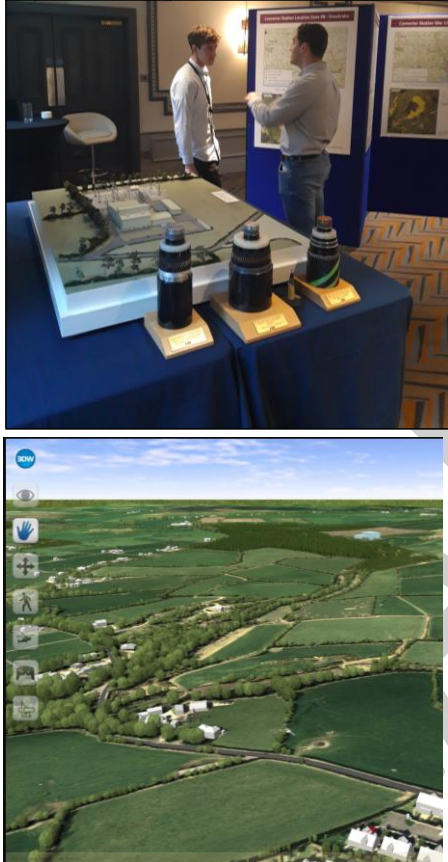
The award recognised how EirGrid applied its bespoke Six-Step Grid Development Process to the project, which allowed the approach to stakeholder consultation for the Celtic Interconnector project to be continuously evaluated and improved upon in line with stakeholder needs. Of particular note by the jury panel was the commencement of engagement and consultation with stakeholders at an early stage of project development.

This early commencement allowed for good levels of feedback which was responded to by the development of a holistic communication and engagement approach. This approach evolved to include a diverse set of high-quality measures such as 3D visualisation technology and architectural models.

Commented [A3]: To be updated in advance of final application to reflect effects of COVID-19 on door to door consultation and actions and initiatives undertaken to mitigate in 2021.

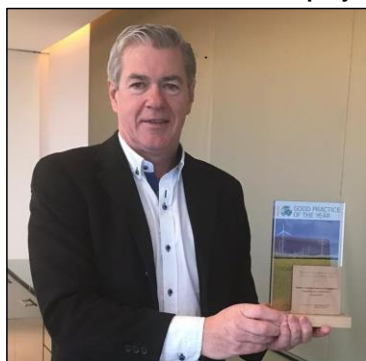
⁹ See Appendix A Advertisements

Figure 2.2: Cable Samples and Architectural model of EWIC Converter station and 3d visualisation technology sample area.



These were used to show the project's visual impact in the community. Other methods used to enhance consultation included the appointment of a dedicated Community Liaison Officer and demonstration of Electro Magnetic Frequencies (EMF) as experienced in traditional household settings, with a view to addressing people's concerns, and providing information in the context of the project at public open events.

Figure 2.3: Mark Foley, CEO EirGrid Group accepting the 2020 Renewables Grid Initiative Good Practice of the Year Award' for Communication and Engagement for the Celtic Interconnector project



2.9 Project Communications Team

In recognition of the strategic importance of the project and the importance of local communication and engagement, EirGrid appointed a dedicated Community Liaison Officer (CLO) to the project in 2018. This helped establish good communication channels between communities and other stakeholders and the project team. In addition, the project continues to be supported by the internal communications and public engagement team at EirGrid.

In addition to the CLO, the project also benefits from the focus of EirGrid's experienced Agricultural Liaison Officers (ALOs). ALOs have the expert knowledge to facilitate them in liaising with landowners, in particular those engaged in farming, as well as any landowner whose property is directly impacted by the project development. ALOs have been engaging with stakeholders throughout the project development, but in particular since 2018 within Step 3 and 4 of the Six-Step process.

To ensure best-in-class consultation and engagement analysis and methodologies, EirGrid appointed Traverse in 2019, an independent consultancy specialising in consultation analysis, to assist with the consultation process, analyse responses to the consultation and report on their findings.

Other agencies and internal personnel are used on an ad hoc basis in response to project requirements.

3 Public Participation and Stakeholder Engagement

3.1 Approach to consultation and public participation

Our approach to consultation and public participation is driven by EirGrid's commitment to the Six-Step grid development process, as outlined in Section 2.7 above.

At each step, a series of activities are carried out in order to inform, engage, and consult with stakeholders and facilitate their participation in the project development process.

3.2 Step 1

The objective in Step 1 is for the project need to be confirmed and explained to representatives and interest groups.

3.2.1 Project Actions

In November 2009, EirGrid published the '*Interconnector Economic Feasibility Report*'¹⁰. This report identified an interconnector with France as a viable opportunity to connect to Europe and initiated the project concept that was to evolve into the Celtic Interconnector.

In 2011 the PCI status of the Celtic Interconnector under Delegated Regulation (EU) 1391/2013 was granted by the EU. Over the next five years feasibility studies were completed and supported financially by the EU Commission.

The first PCI list was published in October 2013, and the Celtic Interconnector was included. This inclusion would mean that the project would benefit from:

- Defined planning and permit granting procedures (capped at 3.5 years),
- A single national competent authority that would act as a one-stop-shop for permit granting procedures,
- Fewer administrative costs for the project promoters and authorities due to a more streamlined environmental assessment procedure, whilst respecting the requirements of EU law,
- Increased transparency and improved public participation,
- Increased visibility and attractiveness for investors thanks to an enhanced regulatory framework where costs are allocated to the countries that benefit most from a completed project, and
- The possibility to receive financial support under the €5.85 billion Connecting Europe Facility.

¹⁰ www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Interconnection_Economic_Feasibility_Report.pdf

A marine route investigation was conducted in 2014 / 2015 with further feasibility studies completed in 2016. These studies were published on the EirGrid website and reported on in the media¹¹. The initial studies considered the viability of linking the two previously unconnected markets through a long-distance subsea cable that would link La Martyre in Brittany with either the Great Island 220 kV substation in Co Wexford or the 220 kV substation at Knockraha, Co Cork.

The studies were awarded almost €4 million in funding by the European Commission. Following their successful completion, in July 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding between RTE and EirGrid was signed to develop further the cooperation between France and Ireland on this project¹². It was signed by President Francois Hollande and An Taoiseach Enda Kenny and reported on in the Irish and European media.

Figure 3.1: 21st July 2016 François Hollande and An Taoiseach Enda Kenny signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)



3.2.2 Stakeholder & Landowner Participation

The period from project conception to 2016 was prior to the launch of EirGrid's Six-Step process for grid development projects, which was launched in 2016. Notwithstanding this, high level liaison and cooperation at government levels continued in order to build a solid platform for subsequent project cooperation and development. Once launched the Celtic Interconnector was aligned to Step 2 of the process.

¹¹ <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/energy-and-resources/4m-given-to-investigate-french-irish-electricity-link-1.2284878>

¹² IRISH TIMES 03.06.2012 EirGrid considers Ireland-France electricity interconnector

Media exposure derived from the strategic importance of the project was useful in raising the public profile of the project in the early stages of development¹³.

Interest in the project was accentuated by its inclusion on the PCI list with reports made available to the public on the company website.

3.3 Step 2

The objective in Step 2 is for a number of technical solutions to be considered with the objective of shortlisting feasible options.

3.3.1 Project Actions

In July 2016, the Initial Design and Pre-Consultation phase of the Celtic Interconnector was launched. As part of this phase EirGrid in partnership with Réseau de Transport d'Electricité (RTE), the French transmission system operator and project partner, undertook to complete:

- Additional marine surveys in order to provide a clearer picture of routing options for the project;
- Consultation activities to get feedback on our plans to date, and in preparation for the statutory consultation and consenting processes;
- Further cost benefit analysis to ensure the benefits for France and Ireland are clear and robust; and,
- Initial preparation for the procurement process.

A joint assessment of the feasibility of the Celtic Interconnector project had already been completed. This included a detailed suite of marine surveys, marine engineering studies, and a technical assessment. These assessments concluded that there were feasible options for the various onshore elements of the project and a feasible marine route between Ireland and France was identified.

At this point the studies also revealed the best option for the Celtic Interconnector was to connect to the existing Irish transmission system at East Cork.

It was communicated via the project pages on the company website that the Initial Design and Pre-Consultation phase did not represent a commitment to construct the interconnector and that initial design work as well as further studies of the marine environment close to the shore, landing points for a subsea cable and connection points to the electricity transmission grid, amongst other studies would be required.

To inform and engage stakeholders a project update brochure was developed and made available in digital and printed format containing a summary of the assessments

¹³ <https://www.siliconrepublic.com/comms/celtic-interconnector-ireland-france-electricity-cable>

to date and instructions regarding how to provide feedback. The summary confirmed that:

- The project was feasible
- The best performing option was to connect to France from East Cork
- That a shortlist of options for landfall locations had been identified
- That the best performing connection point was the 220 kV substation at Knockraha.

In January 2018 it was established that additional studies would be needed along the coast of East Cork. An application for a Foreshore License was submitted to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in order to carry out these surveys.

A copy of the application, the relevant maps, plans, reports and drawings, were made available in Garda stations in Youghal, Ballycotton and Midleton, Co Cork. Advertisements were also placed in the Evening Echo and Irish Examiner on 18 January 2018 announcing the public consultation phase of the Foreshore Licence application.

The application was made available on the Department's website. It opened on 18 January 2018 and closed on 16 February 2018. Subsequently additional geotechnical and environmental marine surveys were carried out in May 2018.

On 5 February 2018, EirGrid announced East Cork as being the most suitable location for the Celtic Interconnector. The announcement was made at a meeting hosted by the Cork Chamber of Commerce and attended by local and national elected representatives and other stakeholders.

3.3.2 Stakeholder and Landowner Participation

In addition to ongoing liaison with government departments and other such stakeholders including Cork County Council, specific engagements were held with local community and fishery groups during Step 2 including meetings with:

- The Knockraha Community Association on 15th May 2017
- The Ballycotton Fisherman's Association on 17th July 2017

Members of the EirGrid team presented the project to the Southern Regional Assembly in Waterford in October 2017 and the East Cork Municipal District Meeting in Midleton in November 2017. These meetings placed additional information on the project in the public arena; ensuring elected representatives were kept informed of progress on the project and were able to communicate directly with the project team.

Industry and state bodies were also engaged with including:

- Engineers Ireland;
- the Industrial Development Agency (IDA); and,

- Energy Cork.

This served to continue to raise the project profile amongst a diverse audience.

Participation in Step 2 therefore extended to engagement with statutory bodies and professional organisations.

Public engagement was addressed via direct contact with community organisations and elected representatives and additional promotion and visibility amongst the general public was achieved via media coverage.

3.4 Step 3

In Step 3, technology options were considered in more detail. Broad study areas were identified, within which options for routes and the locations for infrastructure would be considered. Information was provided to stakeholders including on the methods used to analyse the technology options and study areas.

3.4.1 Project Activities

Step 3 was launched on 5th February 2018 at a meeting hosted by the Cork Chamber of Commerce. The meeting was attended by elected representatives and project stakeholders.

At the meeting, East Cork was confirmed as the best performing connection point for the project.

Following this decision, an information and engagement campaign to raise the project's profile in the identified project area was commenced.

3.4.2 Mobile Information Unit

On 9th and 10th May 2018, EirGrid held drop-in sessions in its Mobile Information Unit (MIU) in Midleton and Youghal in Co. Cork. These sessions were advertised in local print media and online.¹⁴ The MIU was located at busy commuter locations on the Main Street in both Midleton and Youghal and were accessible to the public.

Over the course of two days, members of the project team met with stakeholders to discuss the project and respond to people's issues and questions. The mobile information unit was staffed by:

- Public engagement team members; and,
- Numerous EirGrid representatives including onshore and offshore project managers.

¹⁴ See Appendix A for sample advertisements

Figure 3.2: Members of the Project Team at Main Street Midleton, May 2018

The MIU presence was advertised via radio interview on Community Radio Youghal (CRY104FM) in the days before the event.

In addition emails were sent alerting all Community groups in East Cork via the Public Participation Networks (PPN) email outreach.

Stakeholders met included members of the public and representatives of local community organisations.

3.4.3 Open Evenings

Subsequent to the Mobile Information Unit community events, a programme of information evenings was held in communities within the project study area. In 2018 public meetings to discuss the Celtic Interconnector project were held at:

- Glounthaune Church Centre Wednesday 26th September 2018
- Knockraha Community Centre Wednesday 26th September 2018
- Carrigtwohill Community Hall Thursday 4th October 2018
- Lisgoold Community Hall Thursday 4th October 2018
- Youghal, Cumann na Daoine Hall Monday 3rd December 2018
- Cloyne Community Hall Friday 7th December 2018

The meetings were advertised in local media and promoted widely on social media sites including:

- EirGrid project pages;
- EirGrid social media platforms;
- Local Community Facebook pages; and

- Facebook pages of local elected representatives.

The events were also promoted by email to all elected representatives and the local Public Participation Network (PPN) of community organisations.

The purpose of these events was to inform the general public and project stakeholders on the project. The options presented were in respect of:

- The converter station;
- The key over ground construction element of the project; and,
- The landfall locations.

14 feasible converter station location zones were presented to stakeholders for comment, each zone denoting an area of approximately 2km radius, as well as 5 landfall options.

Feedback forms were made available at the open evenings to gather commentary.

On 3rd September 2018, EirGrid gave an update to local elected representatives at the meetings of the East Cork and Cobh-Glanmire Municipal Districts.

Meetings were also held with representatives of the Ballycotton Fisherman's Association (4th October 2018) and Youghal Fisherman's Association (13th November 2018).

An update was given to the Cork Regional Division of Engineers Ireland in the Rochestown Park Hotel on 13th November 2018.

3.4.4 Additional Activities

Additional activities and events included:

- Sponsorship of the Youghal Queen of the Sea Festival, with EirGrid staff available in the Mobile Information Unit for the duration of the event. The event was promoted locally in the East Cork area.
- Cork Summer Show, with EirGrid staff available in the Mobile Information Unit for the duration of the event. The event was promoted nationally.
- National Ploughing Festival, with EirGrid available at a dedicated stand. The event was also promoted nationally.

3.4.5 Step 3 Consultation

A formal Step 3 consultation was launched on the 11th April for eight weeks, closing on the 10th June 2019. This consultation considered a shortlist of three landfall locations

- Ballinwilling Strand, East Cork
- Claycastle Beach, Youghal
- Redbarn Beach Youghal

And six converter station location zones in East Cork, including:

- Ballyadam
- Leamlara
- Knockraha
- Pigeon Hill
- Kilquane
- Balyvatta

Landowners in the Converter Station location Zones (c. 300) and in proximity to the shortlisted landfall locations (c.270) were advised by letter that these areas were being considered zones as suitable for key infrastructural elements of the project. Letters were also sent to existing stakeholders whose details were registered on the project's database, statutory bodies and elected representatives (local councillors, TDs, MEPs)

Advertisements were placed in local and national newspapers and on social media including social media pages of community organisations and elected representatives and notifications sent via email to the PPN network.

EirGrid published its assessments and supporting information on the proposed shortlist of converter station location zones and landfall location options for consultation on 11th April 2019 via the following documents:

- Offshore Constraints Report
- Onshore Constraints Report and Mapping
- Strategic Social Impact Assessment Scoping Report
- Step 3 - Performance Matrix Assessments
- Project Update Brochure - Step 3 Consultation (Spring 2019)

Feedback was invited via an online feedback form, in person at the advertised public meetings, by phone, email or in writing.

3.4.6 Stakeholder and Landowner Participation

The objectives of the initial engagement activities embarked on in 2018 included:

- Raising the project profile;
- Informing stakeholders;
- Gathering feedback and additional local information.
- Promoting access to further project information and documentation,

During this period, the EirGrid team engaged with the public through phone, feedback forms, emails, open days and meetings. Feedback was gathered by means of a

physical feedback form completed at the information evenings. Media coverage also contributed to raising the level of public awareness.

Attendance at these events was satisfactory with some venues getting higher attendance than others. Feedback received was informative for the project team and their ongoing assessments.

The Step 3 consultation followed the campaign and was widely advertised and promoted.

Participation was facilitated through:

- Phone
- Face to face meetings
- Open evenings

And online, through:

- Email
- Online consultation forms

On the forms used to capture feedback, respondents were asked how important it was to consider 13 distinct aspects of the proposals, including air quality, the local economy and the historic environment, when choosing a landfall location. They were also invited to comment on three shortlisted locations for landfall:

- Claycastle Beach;
- Ballinwilling Strand; and
- Redbarn Beach.

Respondents were asked to give their views on twelve aspects of the proposals that could influence their choice for a converter station location zone and were invited to comment on six shortlisted zones:

- Zone 1 – Ballyadam;
- Zone 6 – Leamlara;
- Zone 9 – Knockraha;
- Zone 10 – Pigeon Hill;
- Zone 12, Kilquane; and
- Zone 14 – Ballyvatta.

Respondents were able to respond by completing an online response form, submitting a letter, sending an email, or holding conversations with EirGrid representatives at consultation events.¹⁵

In total 1,037 responses were received as a result of the consultation process. These included 113 records of engagement with the EirGrid team at consultation events and 770 campaign responses that contained pre-written identical text, with some respondents adding their own comments to the campaign template. Five different campaigns were identified, focusing on concerns relating to three of the proposed converter station location zones: Zone 6 – Leamlara, Zone 10 – Pigeon Hill and Zone 14 – Ballyvatta.

Respondents offered various views on the project: whereas some respondents expressed support for the project, saying that it is a necessary measure to secure Ireland's energy supply, other respondents discussed the potential negative impact the project could have on specific landfall locations and converter station location zones.

All views were captured and reported on in the 'Celtic Interconnector Project Step 3 Consultation Report'¹⁶ published in August 2019.

In addition to the consultations, detailed meetings were also held with numerous statutory bodies including:

- PCI Unit of An Bord Pleanála;
- SID Unit of An Bord Pleanála;
- Cork County Council (numerous Departments);
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (Foreshore Unit);
- Department of Environment, Climate and Communications;
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII);
- National Parks and Wildlife Service – Development Application Unit;
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- The Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU);
- Irish Rail;
- Irish Water;
- IDA; and,
- Inland Fisheries Ireland.

¹⁵ See Appendix B for a Copy of the Online Consultation Form

¹⁶ https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Celtic-Interconnector_Step-3_Consultation-Report_030919-FINAL-FINAL.pdf

Following the close of the consultation, a consultation report and response was published online. A number of common themes were raised in the majority of submissions. These were:

- Noise;
- Health;
- Visual impact;
- Farming and land use; and,
- Traffic and road network.

The response document available commented on the themes, and where available, gave additional information to answer stakeholders concerns. The questions answered in the response document included:

- How will the project be funded?
- How will this impact on the local economy?
- Will the fibre optic cable be of local benefit?
- Will there be more energy infrastructure developed close to the interconnector in the years to come?
- How will the interconnector connect to the Knockraha substation?
- How many cables are there?
- Why was the Knockraha substation chosen as the most suitable connection point?
- Will the local electricity system be affected?
- Will the outcomes of the studies which have been carried out to date be published?
- Will it bring in nuclear energy from France?
- Will this project impact on planning applications in the area in the future?
- Are the forestry sites being considered suitable for a project of this nature?
- Will there be any impacts on local ecology?
- Will the cable be buried or laid on the seabed?
- How many other cables will have to be crossed over in the sea?
- Will the project impact on surrounding marine life?
- Will the project affect the potential for archaeological work at Claycastle Beach?
- Will the project interfere with local radio signals?

Further information was also made available to address concerns specific to:

- Electro Magnetic Fields (EMFs)

- Water Quality
- Air Quality

At the close of the consultation, EirGrid published a 'Step 3 Preferred Options Report' dated August 2019 on the EirGrid website¹⁷ along with a separate 'Project Update Brochure - Step 3 Consultation (Spring 2019)'¹⁸ that summarised the Preferred Options Report and confirmed the shortlisted locations which concerned 6 converter station zones and 3 landfall locations (please see Volume 3C2 Appendices that are included as part of the application).

3.5 Step 4

In Step 4, detailed routes and sites are developed that specify the exact position of any new equipment and infrastructure. Information is provided to stakeholders on how the sites were chosen and on what assessments have been carried out.

3.5.1 Project Activities

In November 2019, EirGrid communicated an Emerging Best Performing Option (EBPO) for the landfall option, three for the converter station location with one emerging best performing option, and proposed underground cable routes. This information was made public on the project pages of the EirGrid website. The information published included:

- 'Step 4A Consultant's Development Options Report'¹⁹;
- Claycastle - Landfall location and cable route map;
- Kilquane - Converter station option and cable route map;
- Knockraha - Converter station option and cable route map;
- Ballyadam - Converter station option and cable route map; and,
- Project Update Brochure - Step 4 Consultation (Winter 2019 - 2020)²⁰.

3.5.2 Open Evenings

Seven Open Evenings were scheduled to service the East Cork project area including:

- Landfall communities;
- Communities on the DC and AC cable routes including agricultural areas, commuter towns and stakeholders using arterial route in the South East (N25); and,

¹⁷ <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Step-3-Preferred-Options-Report.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/EirGrid-Celtic-Interconnector-Update-Spring-2019.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Celtic-Interconnector-Step-4A-Consultants-Development-Options-Report.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/EirGrid-Celtic-Interconnector-Project-Update-4-Proof-07-DOWNLOAD.pdf>

- Mixed rural / commuter localities near the Study Area of the proposed converter station sites and system connection location.

The events were:

- Knockraha Community Centre: Monday 18th November 2019
- Carrigtwohill Community Hall: Tuesday 19th November 2019
- Midleton Park Hotel: Friday 22nd November 2019
- Midleton Park Hotel: Saturday 23rd November 2019
- Walter Raleigh Hotel, Youghal: Wednesday 27th November 2019
- Castlemartyr Resort Hotel: Thursday 28th November 2019
- Killeagh Community Centre: Friday 29th November 2019

The events were designed to inform and consult with the general public, stakeholders and landowners as to the project options. They were advertised in print media and online, with strong attendance at all locations.

In addition to the Open Evenings, meetings took place in Midleton and Cobh on 7th October 2019 with local elected representatives in the East Cork and Cobh-Glanmire Municipal Districts, in order to explain how the various assessments were being finalised.

Advance notification was sent by letter to registered landowners within the shortlisted converter station sites and in proximity to the shortlisted landfall location along with stakeholders who had previously registered to receive project updates. In addition, letters advising of the consultation were sent to statutory bodies and elected representatives (local councillors, TDs, MEPs).

Advertisements were placed in local and national newspapers and across social media. Email notification was issued to all registered email addresses and the PPN network.

At these Open Evenings, adapted and improved methods of communication and engagement were put into practice in response to learnings taken from the Step 3 Consultation. These included the use of visual communication methodologies.

3.5.3 Visual Communication

Previously in Step 3, an architectural model of the converter station as built for the East West Interconnector project had been displayed. This was a representative model, but it illustrated clearly what a converter station could look like. However it was not intended to confirm what visual impact the Celtic Interconnector converter station would have on its receiving environment.

Rather, a virtual 3D model was built and used at the open evenings to show the view towards the converter station from any local point. This allowed a stakeholder to view the project from his/her own residence or place of business. This system allowed such

views to be seen with and without tree cover and from various heights. It gave a more accurate representation, and addressed the issue from the perspective of any individual stakeholder. The technology required the use of 2 high speed computers which were set up for viewing at the open evenings. Stills could also be printed off for individual stakeholders. The landfall location was also represented.

3.5.4 Health Information

Health concerns in regard to electrical infrastructure are concerns for stakeholders. While material had been produced to educate stakeholders as to EMF in regard to electrical infrastructure including overhead line and substations, material relating specifically to underground cabling had not previously been available.

In response to concerns, a dedicated brochure was produced which clearly illustrated and treated EMF concerns in regard to underground cabling. It answered questions including:

- How do underground or undersea cables work?
- What magnetic field levels do alternating current underground power cables produce?
- What magnetic field levels do direct current underground power cables produce?

At the Step 4 consultation open evenings, a display dedicated to addressing EMF was manned by a specialist company²¹. The display was a physical demonstration of how EMF works and illustrated the issue using, for example, household appliances and measuring the resulting EMF.

The objective was that the demonstration, alongside the improved written information, would help to address stakeholder concerns.

3.5.5 Stakeholder and Landowner Participation

Over the course of the consultation, respondents were asked to give their views on the three emerging best performing options for a converter station site, namely:

- Site 1 – Ballyadam;
- Site 9b – Knockraha; and
- Site 12 – Kilquane.

Respondents were also asked to give their views on the emerging best performing option for a landfall location at Claycastle Beach, and the required underground cable routes. Respondents could also offer their views on any of the previously discussed options if they felt there was any new information to be considered, offer suggestions for

²¹ <https://cei.ie/about-cei/company/>

groups to support a local advisory group, comment on how a proposed community fund could be used, and provide feedback about the consultation process itself.

Events were well attended at all locations. Locations had been selected to optimise people's ability to attend one or more East Cork locations at a convenient time.

3.5.6 Capturing Feedback

With regard to capturing feedback, respondents were able to complete an online response form, submit a letter, send an email, or hand in a hardcopy response form to an EirGrid representative at consultation events. Feedback was also taken by phone.

In total 1,047 responses were received, including 928 campaign responses that contained pre-written identical text, with some respondents adding their own comments to the campaign template.

Respondents offered various views on the overall project, with some supporting the ambition for greater interconnection with Europe. Others felt that the project was unnecessary and expressed concern about some European countries' use of nuclear power, as well as the perceived environmental impact of the project.

Respondents commented on the perceived environmental impact of the landfall location at Claycastle Beach, saying that the beach is currently undeveloped land, and that it should not be disturbed. They also commented on the proposed cable route and the distance of Claycastle Beach from the potential converter station sites and expressed concern that the need to lay underground cables to connect the converter station site could damage utilities and social amenities in the area surrounding the cable route.

Of the three converter station sites, Site 1 at Ballyadam was noted to be a site that was already zoned for industry and therefore not likely to disturb the surrounding communities; however there was some concern that a large amount of AC cabling would be required to connect the site with the existing Knockraha substation, as this site is the furthest from the substation.

Converter station Site 9b at Knockraha was noted to be the closest to the existing substation and would therefore require the least amount of AC cabling. Respondents said that the surrounding landscape could be adjusted to help mitigate the potential noise impact once the converter station was operational. Conversely other respondents said that the site was elevated and exposed, and that development at this site would have a significant visual impact and potentially lead to further industrialisation of a rural area. Respondents also commented on other possible negative environmental impacts as well as potential damage to sites of historic interest.

Converter station Site 12 at Kilquane was noted to have a suitable landscape to provide visual screening of the converter station and to support noise mitigation measures. However there were concerns that using this site could lead to further industrialisation of a rural area, and that there could be negative environmental impacts and potential damage to sites of historic interest.

A common theme across all comments about potential converter station sites was that there would be very little benefit to the communities surrounding whichever site was chosen. Respondents who commented on the community fund generally supported the idea investing in local community facilities to support a positive legacy from the project.

3.5.7 Response to Step 4 Consultation

The consultation provided a lot of information which required to be taken into account as part of the ongoing project assessment process in 2020. Particular focus emerged from the consultation on the assessment process for converter station site.

A number of respondents supported Site 1, the IDA site at Ballyadam near Carrigtwohill, as the most appropriate location for the new converter station, given the existing industrial and commercial activity in the area. Feedback was also received from both local and national elected representatives recommending that full consideration should be given to Ballyadam.

It was agreed that work to determine a suitable location within Site 1 would need to continue prior to a final decision.

With additional work required, and due to challenges to ways of working due to COVID-19 restrictions it was decided to publish the 'Step 4 Consultation Report'²² in May 2020 and respond to as many of the issues raised as we were able to at that time. Further updates, along with additional findings made during the ongoing assessment would be communicated once a final decision would be made on the best performing option for the project later that year.

A *Step 4 Consultation Report* was published alongside a *Step 4 Project Update Document (Spring 2020)*²³ communicating what stage the project assessment was at. Common themes to emerge from the Step 4 consultation included:

- Noise;
- Health and Safety;
- Visual Impact and Light Pollution;
- Impact on the Community and the Community Fund;
- Impacts on Local Water Quality;
- Recreational Land use, Ecology and Wildlife;
- Local Ecology and Wildlife;
- History and Heritage; and,
- Traffic and Road Network Concerns.

²² <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Celtic-Interconnector-Step-4-Consultation-Report.pdf>

²³ <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Celtic-Interconnector-Step-4-Project-Update-Documents-Spring-2020.pdf>

3.5.8 Consultation and Engagement 2020 – COVID 19 Mitigation measures

The publication of the Step 4 Consultation Report in May 2020 was an important step in responding to stakeholder concerns raised in the preceding consultation.

Subsequently it became increasingly challenging to meet with stakeholders face to face, due to Government restrictions in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic. To address this, the team remained available to all stakeholders via direct contact numbers and email addresses.

In May 2020, adverts such as that advertised in Figure 3.3, were published in broadsheets and on EirGrid social media to advise the public that work was progressing despite COVID-19 restrictions and provide project team contact details.

Figure 3.3 Copy of Public Awareness Advert during COVID-19 Restrictions



In addition:

- Online meetings were held with community organisations and councils on request to answer queries and concerns and continue to engage and take feedback.
- The Step 4 Project Update Document (Spring 2020) was published online and issued to registered stakeholders by email.

- To support ongoing communication and engagement, the project team hosted two online information webinars on the 5th and 6th of August 2020, engaging with members of community councils, business groups and interested stakeholders in the community. The project team took attendees through a short presentation where they gave an overview of the project and an update as to its current status before taking questions from attendees. Following the meetings, the presentation was published on EirGrid's project specific website²⁴.

Commented [A4]: Consultation and engagement carried out in Step 5 will be included here in the Final Application File

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²⁴ <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Celtic-Interconnector-Step-4-Overview.pdf>

4 Landowner Consultation and Engagement

4.1 Approach to landowner Consultation and Engagement

Consultation and engagement with landowners who may be directly impacted by the Celtic Interconnector project has been a critical aspect to the project development process. At EirGrid, this role is carried out by Agricultural Liaison Officers (ALOs).

ALOs are responsible for:

- Providing landowners with a comprehensive knowledge of a project in a timely manner;
- Giving landowners an opportunity to influence decisions being made by EirGrid in regard to the project development; and,
- Discussing the siting of new lines and cables, land access, and also providing information on community funds and proximity payments.

At the Step 3 Consultation stage, letters were issued to landowners in the project study area as per information available through the Property Registration Authority of Ireland (PRAI). These letters were intended to inform landowners about the project plans, raise the project profile and provide contact details for the project team to the landowners.

ALO's were available to engage with stakeholders and landowners at information evenings in the communities where cable routes, methods of work and specific concerns could be addressed.

4.2 Engagement process

In late July / early August 2020 as part of the engagement and consultation required for Step 4, direct landowner engagement on the cable route linking Claycastle to Ballyadam and onto Knockraha began.

Phase 1 of landowner engagement involved engaging with landowners for off-road routes at Castlemartyr and Killeagh along with all of the locations where initial engineering surveys identified a potential off-road requirement for reasons of river / stream crossings, culvert crossings, major utility crossings, livestock underpasses and for locations where for various reasons an on-road route was undesirable such as tight corners, extensive mature tree lines, etc.

The Phase 1 engagement which ran from late July 2020 to early October 2020 (including surveys of all lands) occurred during a period of limited Government COVID-19 restrictions (Level 2 restrictions as per the *Living with COVID-19 Plan* were introduced on 15th September 2020).

This Phase 1 engagement involved direct interactions with impacted landowners and was essential in involving landowners in the assessment processes required to subsequently confirm cable routes.

Phase 2 of the landowner engagement involved meeting all the landowners whose lands had been identified as suitable for a passing bay and identifying suitable sites for construction laydown compounds. A further 35 landowners were identified for phase 2 engagement all of whom were contacted directly by the ALO team.

It is the experience of the ALO team at EirGrid that direct and personal contact with landowners implicated on projects is essential to identifying and addressing concerns. It is EirGrid's experience that this establishes good communication and ongoing engagement.

The identification of landowners implicated in the studied cable route options for the Celtic Interconnector project coincided with repeated Level 5 COVID-19 restrictions in 2020.

In accordance with best practice health and safety protocols, face to face meetings were prohibited for the duration of Government COVID-19 Level 5 restrictions. This impacted on the ability of the team to engage with landowners. This restriction lasted for 6 weeks.

Alternatives to face to face meetings were considered but deemed unsatisfactory. In addition the data from the PRAI does not contain any telephone contact information making contact challenging.

Landowner engagement recommenced in early December 2020, when Government COVID-19 restrictions were eased to Level 3. Landowner engagement continued up to Christmas 2020 and recommenced in so far as was possible in January 2021, prior to further Level 5 restrictions imposed by the Government in response to increasing COVID-19 case levels.

4.3 Participation

The face to face engagement between the experienced ALOs and landowners ensured a general understanding by landowners of the project, the infrastructure to be developed, and potential or likely impact on landholdings and agricultural activities. This included both direct impact on landholdings and also in terms of moving livestock etc.

This engagement facilitated general access to lands as required for environmental and technical survey, although some landowners exercised their right to refuse access for survey. In addition, specific engagement occurred where temporary and permanent infrastructure was planned on landholdings, such as off-road cable laying, and the provision of temporary passing bays.

5 Public Participation Methods and Activities

5.1 Public Participation Methods and Outcomes

The EirGrid Public Engagement team employ a wide array of methods and activities as required by their different audiences and project stages. As the project progresses activity is scaled up accordingly and, particularly due to the high level of engagement with Celtic, methods are developed in line with stakeholder feedback and evolving information needs. Methods used for the Celtic Interconnector Project are listed in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Public Participation Methods and Cumulative Outcomes

Steps	Development of Method and Activity	Cumulative Outcomes
Step 1	High level stakeholders awareness activities	Increased stakeholder awareness
Step 2	Dedicated project website pages Dedicated project email address Project Brochure Publication of technical project reports Stakeholder meetings Social media promotion	Establishment of community relationships Increase in publicly available information. Submission of stakeholder feedback forms detailing concerns Concerns addressed by EirGrid
Step 3	Use of visual aids to explain proposals (posters; architectural models) Online consultation questionnaires Focused stakeholder meetings Site walkovers with community groups. Consultation report	Focused community consultations addressing specific concerns. 1,000+ responses to formal consultation
Step 4	Use of visual aids to explain proposals (posters; architectural models) 3D visualisation software to demonstrate visual impact of project Consultation questionnaire online and hardcopy iPad availability at events to facilitate online access to questionnaires and project information Focused stakeholder meetings (virtual) Consultation report Responses to consultation report Webinars	Additional 1,000+ responses to formal consultation

6 Nature of Feedback Received and Impact of Public Participation on Project Development

6.1 Nature of Feedback Received and Impact on Project Development

Table 6.1 sets out the nature of the feedback received according to various categories. It also sets out impact that the public participation process had on project development in terms of setting out how EirGrid responded to this feedback.

Table 6.1 Nature of Feedback Received and Impact on Project Development

Feedback Category	Description of Feedback	Responses to Feedback
Cultural Heritage	During Step 3 the cultural heritage value of the identified converter station location zones (CSLZ 12) at Kilquane was raised by a number of respondents.	<p>A cultural heritage constraints study by Rubicon Heritage Services Ltd of the shortlisted CSLZ was commissioned and a copy of the report is provided in Appendix D Cultural Heritage Report in the Step 3 Consultation Report.</p> <p>Subsequently the siting of the proposed Converter Station site was selected having regard to numerous factors that occurred during the Step 4 process including the findings of the above report.</p>
Visual impact	The nature of circuit construction overhead vs underground was expressed as a concern.	EirGrid confirmed its intention to install both the AC and DC land circuit by way of underground cable in the early stages of project development.
	Concern was expressed over the visual impact of the converter station.	<p>At Step 3 an architectural model was commissioned and used at information evenings to demonstrate the visual impact of the converter station.</p> <p>At Step 4 a 3D visualisation model was commissioned and made available at open evenings to help address stakeholder concerns demonstrating visual impact at varied locations and seasons.</p> <p>Stakeholder visits to the converter station at Portan, Co. Meath (East West Interconnector converter station) were</p>

Feedback Category	Description of Feedback	Responses to Feedback
		<p>facilitated for stakeholders on request.</p> <p>A video was made available online showing the EWIC converter station.</p>
Health	Feedback was received outlining local concern about the potential negative health impacts of electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) as produced by electricity infrastructure.	<p>A dedicated brochure 'The Electricity Grid & your Health' which details EMFs in regard to underground cables was produced and made available to stakeholders in hard copy and online..</p> <p>A demonstration of EMFs in everyday life was made by a specialist contractor at the open evenings held during Step 4.</p>
Noise	Operational noise of the converter station was raised as a concern.	<p>A Preliminary Acoustic Report was produced in May 2020 to help address concerns.</p> <p>Noise impact assessments will be carried out as part of ongoing studies and the final design will be within set acoustic guidelines.</p>
Farming and Land Use	Impact on farming and land use was raised as a concern.	Committed to ongoing engagements with landowners to establish how to mitigate impacts with lessons learned from previous underground cable projects being applied.
Traffic and Road network	Impact on traffic and road use was raised as a concern.	The project route has been established in cooperation with landowners with measures, such as passing bays, anticipated in order to ease traffic disruption.

Commented [A5]: This table may be updated for the Final Application File to record any activities held in Step 5

7 The Impact of Feedback received

7.1 The impact of Consultation

Consultation on the Celtic Interconnector project was structured, methodical, consistent, resourced and improved and developed in line with the project and stakeholder requirements as outlined in Section 3 of this report.

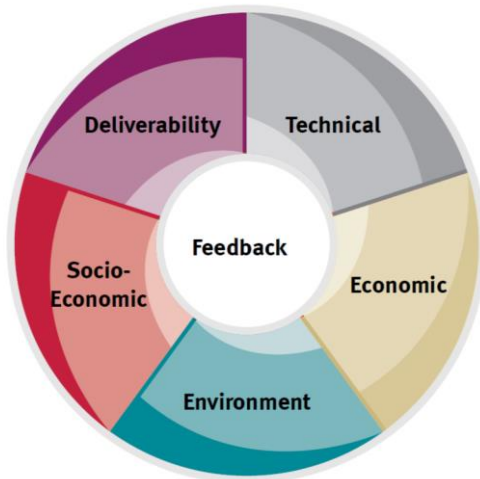
7.2 Outcome of Approach to Consultation

The purpose and aim of consulting, including on an Emerging Best Performing Option was to ensure a robust project development process which could be influenced by stakeholder feedback. In EirGrid's experience, many people do not take an active interest in a project until a precise route or project is defined. However, it is important that EirGrid gathers views before this point and that these views help to shape the emerging project.

An iterative approach to consultation allowed EirGrid to explore options and make well informed decisions. This feedback was considered as part of the EirGrid assessment criteria which includes deliverability; technical; economic; environment and socioeconomic performance. The approach taken to consultation and engagement allowed for:

- Early inclusion of stakeholders in the project development process;
- Early identification of additional information for inclusion in the project development process; and,
- Incremental development of the project in line with the assessment process.

Figure 7.1 Multi-Criteria decision making in EirGrid's Six-Step Process source: EirGrid



7.3 Identification of Best Performing Option

The identification of the Best Performing Option followed a bespoke process defined by the complexities of the project and the high number of considerations required. The sequence of public engagement events, consultations and outcomes is illustrated in Figure 7.2 below.

Figure 7.2 Sequence of Public Engagement Events, Consultations and Outcomes



8 Additional Activities

8.1 Joint activities with project Partners

As part of the PCI process, the project partners were obliged to work together to inform European citizens, and by default citizens of both France and Ireland, as to the project and its development. This was achieved through the means outlined below.

8.2 Project of Common Interest activities

8.2.1 .eu Website²⁵

This website was established in cooperation with RTE, EirGrid's project partner. This website fulfils the requirements of Article 9(7) of the TEN-E Regulation as it includes a link to the Commission website. It is designed to inform European citizens as to the project context, status and stage of development. It also links back to each of the project partner's websites facilitating additional information to be procured by stakeholders. The website is available in both the English and French language. Key updates and news are posted on the site.

8.2.2 Brochure

A project brochure introducing the project details, its anticipated benefits, current status, and timeline for consultation, is available on the website in both French and English.

8.2.3 Video

An informative video created by both partners illustrating the project details, the anticipated benefits and key milestones, is available on the website in both French and English.

8.2.4 PCI status

Further to the prescribed activities required as a PCI the project has also raised its public profile through consistent political support. This included activities around the securing of a Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) grant for €530 million in December 2019. Activities leading to this milestone event included:

- May 2019: An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar and President of France Emmanuel Macron submitted a joint request to the European Commission seeking financial support for the Celtic Interconnector electricity link. The Taoiseach and Mr Macron co-signed the

²⁵ <https://www.celticinterconnector.eu/>

letter requesting Jean-Claude Juncker's support for the grant application before a European Council meeting in Brussels.

- October 2019: EirGrid, in cooperation with Réseau de Transport d'Electricité (RTE), held an event in October 2019 in Midleton, East Cork on the occasion of the signing of an application request for European Commission funding for the Celtic Interconnector under the Commission's 2019 Connecting Europe Facility Energy Programme. The event brought together a wide range of stakeholders including senior members of both project partner organisations, senior national elected representatives in both Ireland and France, local elected representatives and stakeholders.
- December 2019: A signature ceremony in Brussels occurred on 3 and 4 December 2019 in Brussels, in the presence of Kadri Simson, Commissioner for Energy and Phil Hogan, Commissioner for Trade for the European Commission. It was chaired by the Director-General for Energy, Ditte Juul Jørgensen. Sean Canney, Minister of State for Natural Resources, Community Affairs and Digital Development of Ireland and Fabrice Dubreuil, Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the European Union represented France and Ireland.

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9 Conclusions

9.1 Compliance with best practice and regulations as per PCI requirements

The approach to public and landowner consultation adopted for the Celtic Interconnector benefitted from the dual requirement to meet the standards demanded for PCI projects as set out in the Concept for Public Participation, those required by both national and European laws, as well as those embodied in the EirGrid Six-Step grid development process. The early focus on consultation and engagement and the additional engagement activity due to the project need to explore a wide variety of options enhanced the process, creating a better outcome for the project.

9.2 Effective Dissemination of Information to the Public and Landowners

Public and landowner consultation and engagement has been central to the project development process for the Celtic Interconnector from the project's inception. EirGrid's six step process has created a distinct opportunity as part of the project development process to inform, engage and consult with a diverse range of stakeholders from an early stage of project development.

Since 2016, EirGrid has employed direct and indirect communication methods ranging from traditional approaches such as face to face meetings, letters and open evenings to using online webinars and meetings in order to reach communities and stakeholders across East Cork who may be impacted or affected by the Celtic Interconnector. In total over 2,000 responses were received to consultation processes and this feedback was considered carefully alongside the other assessment criteria to assist in identifying the best performing project option.

9.3 Nature of Participation

Participation occurred by a wide range of stakeholders. This included guidance and input from specialised consultants, statutory bodies, business organisations, community organisations, community councils, local government and the general public and landowners.

9.4 Impact of Public Consultation on the Final Proposal

The final proposal has benefitted from robust public consultation and comment. The Best Performing Option has been identified following careful assessment of concerns raised through consultation, and a comprehensive consideration of alternatives, presented for feedback to the public and other stakeholders. These concerns have been responded to both individually and collectively through the development of information

material and activities carried out throughout the process, and are reflected in the final project proposal.

9.5 Ongoing Engagement

Engagement is ongoing with stakeholders and landowners. Team members dedicated to public outreach continue to communicate updates and developments.

A Community Forum to ensure that stakeholder and community views are understood and properly considered prior to and during project delivery is scheduled to commence in 2021 maintaining engagement and consultation around the project.

Commented [A6]: More information on the Community Forum can be included in the Final Application File

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Appendix A: Advertisements - Selection of Advertisements Used



Celtic Interconnector

We're here to talk.
Main Street, Midleton, 9th May.
Youghal, Market Square, 10th May.

EirGrid operates and develops the electricity grid in Ireland. We are responsible for a safe, secure and reliable source of electricity now and in the future.

Projects like the Celtic Interconnector are part of that future. This project will improve the security of Ireland's electricity supply for decades to come.

Members of our team will be available to answer your questions on **Wednesday 9th May at Main Street, Midleton, Co Cork** or **Thursday 10th May at Youghal, Market Square** from 10am – 4pm.


EIRGRID
The current. The future.

www.eirgrid.com

Contact Eoghan O'Sullivan on 087 247 7732 or email Eoghan.OSullivan@eirgrid.com

mash.iegridgroup.com THE ORIGINAL MIDLETON AND DISTRICT NEWS Wednesday, September 17th, 2014



Celtic Interconnector

We're here to talk.

EirGrid operates and develops the electricity grid in Ireland. We are responsible for a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity now and into the future.

Projects like the Celtic Interconnector are part of that future.

This project will carry electricity between France and Ireland, connecting Ireland to the European energy network.

We will be holding public meetings to discuss the Celtic Interconnector project at:

- Glounthaune Church Centre, 26th September, 7.00 pm**
- Knockraha Community Centre, 26th September, 9.00 pm**
- Carrigtwohill Community Hall, 4th October, 7.15 pm**
- Lisgoold Community Hall, 4th October, 9.00 pm**


Members of the project team will be available to provide an update on the project's development and answer your questions. We also want to hear your views on how we can best deliver this project. We look forward to meeting you there.



EIRGRID
The current. The future.

www.eirgridgroup.com

Contact Michelle Walsh on 085 870 4999 or Eoghan O'Sullivan on 087 247 7732
or email celticinterconnector@eirgrid.com




**Keeping our electricity,
and our conversations, flowing.**


EirGrid operates and develops the national grid, making sure we all have electricity when and where we need it.

In these difficult times we continue to plan for a brighter future, carrying out critical development work on the Celtic Interconnector – a planned subsea cable linking Ireland's and France's electricity grids. You can find the latest project update and consultation report online at http://bit.ly/Celtic_Interconnector_Update.

While we can't meet you face to face right now, we want to keep you informed about what's happening. If you have questions or any views to share, please contact us via email at celticinterconnector@eirgrid.com. You can also speak directly to our Community Liaison Officers, Michelle Walsh on 085 870 4999 or Eoghan O'Sullivan on 087 247 7732. We're still here to answer your questions.


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Appendix B: Copy of the Online Consultation Form



Registration questions

First name

Last name

Email address

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?
 Yes
 No

Name of organisation (if applicable)

House number or name

Address line 1

Address line 2

Town

County

Phone number

Eircode

Your personal data will be securely stored by EirGrid Group as the data controller, and by Traverse (a UK-based consultation company) as the data processor authorised by EirGrid Group, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018), to assist in the work related to the subject of this consultation. This consultation questionnaire is being hosted on Snap Surveys: please see their [GDPR statement](#).

Responses to this consultation will be analysed and may be included in a publicly available summary report. For quotes made by individuals the quote will be displayed but the respondent's name will not. For responses made on behalf of an organisation, the organisation name will be displayed together with the quote, but not the name of the individual who made the response.

Please indicate if you would prefer your response to remain confidential, and not used for reporting purposes.
 I would not like my response to be quoted in a report summarising feedback.

Please read the statements below, and tick to agree to both, before clicking "Next" and taking part in this consultation
 I have read the above information and understand the purpose of the consultation, and how my responses will be used.


I consent to providing data, which will be stored and processed in line with the information given above, and via [EirGrid's Privacy Statement](#)

If you wish to withdraw your consent at any time, please contact dpo@eirgrid.com

Please indicate whether you would like EirGrid to maintain contact with you about the Celtic Interconnector project:
 I give EirGrid permission to contact me during the design, application and development of the Celtic Interconnector project.

This questionnaire contains questions on both the proposed shortlists of landfall locations and converter station location zones. You are welcome to complete only one or both of these sets of questions. At the end of the survey there are also some general questions on the project as a whole and on the consultation process.

Step 3 Online Consultation Form



Landfall location

Q1. In your view, how important is it for us to consider each of the following aspects when choosing the landfall location? Please choose from the options below.


	Very important	Important	Neutral	Not very important	Not important at all	Don't know
Agriculture and land quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Air quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health and security	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Historic environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Landscape and visual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sea, freshwater and flood risk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sound, noise and vibration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traffic and transport	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Waste and material resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wildlife, ecology and biodiversity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify below at Q2b)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q2a. Do you agree with the shortlist of landfall locations identified?

Yes
 No
 Neutral
 Not sure

Q2b. Please provide reasons for your answer.

← Back
↻ Reset
Next →



Converter station location zone

Q1. In your view, how important is it for us to consider each of the following aspects when choosing the converter station location zone? Please choose from the options below.

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Not very important	Not important at all	Don't know
Agriculture and land quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Air quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health and security	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Historic environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Landscape and visual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sound, noise and vibration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traffic and transport	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Waste and material resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wildlife, ecology and biodiversity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify below at Q2b)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q2a. Do you agree with the shortlist of converter station location zones identified?

Yes
 No
 Neutral
 Not sure

Q2b. Please provide reasons for your answer.

← Back ↻ Reset Next →



General comments

Q1. What is your view on the Celtic Interconnector Project? Please select one option from below.

- A very positive step for Ireland
- A positive step for Ireland
- Neither a positive nor a negative step for Ireland
- A negative step for Ireland
- A very negative step for Ireland

Q2. Finally, here is an opportunity for you to comment generally. You may have something else to say about the landfall locations or converter station location zones overall, or the decision-making process which led to these shortlists. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Consultation process

Q3. Have you attended any of the public information events? If so, please select which event(s) you attended below.

- Carrigtwohill
- Cloyne
- Knockraha
- Lisgoold
- Midleton
- Youghal

Q4. How did you first hear about this consultation? Please select one option from below.

- Correspondence from EirGrid
- Online/social media
- Newspaper
- Poster
- TV/radio
- Word of mouth
- Other (please specify)

Please specify:

Q5. Please rate the following areas of the consultation:

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Don't know
Q5a. Consultation events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q5b. Consultation materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q5c. Promotion of the consultation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6. Please provide us with any comments you may have on the consultation process.

Q7. Would you like to receive more information about the project?

Yes
 No

Q8. If so, how would you like to receive this information?


Email
 Project website
 Public events
 Other

Please specify:

Q9. As the project progresses, what aspects would you like to find out more about?

Construction timelines
 Cable routing options
 Visual impact of the development
 Other

Please specify:



Appendix C: List of Relevant Publically Available Documentation

The following documentation is available on EirGrid's project specific website for the Celtic Interconnector Project at <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/the-grid/projects/celtic-interconnector/related-documents/>. Many of the documents referred to in this Volume 2B Public and Landowner Consultation Report can be accessed via this website.

Step 4 Documents:

- Step 4B Consultant's Development Options Report
- Step 4B Brochure (Winter 2020)
- Step 4B - Press release
- Step 4 Overview Presentation
- Cable Route Map
- Video: What does a converter station look like?
- Celtic Interconnector Underground Cable Brochure
- Celtic Interconnector Webinar (August 2020)
- Step 4 Project Update Document (Spring 2020)
- Step 4 Consultation Report
- Preliminary Acoustic Study Report
- Step 4 Brochure (Winter 2019 - 2020)
- Step 4A Consultant's Development Options Report

Step 4 Maps:

- Claycastle - Landfall location and cable route
- Kilquane - Converter station option and cable route
- Knockraha - Converter station option and cable route
- Ballyadam - Converter station option and cable route

Step 3 Documents:

- Preferred Options Report
- Consultation Response Document
- Consultation Report
- Project Update Brochure - Step 3 Consultation (Spring 2019)
- Offshore Constraints Report
- Onshore Constraints Report and Mapping

Commented [A7]: List to be updated in advance of submission of Final Application File to capture any additional material published on the project specific website.

- Strategic Social Impact Assessment Scoping Report
- Performance Matrix Assessments
- Project Update Brochure (2018)

Step 2 Documents:

- Project Update Brochure (2017)
- Marine Route Investigations Report
- Social Impact Assessment - Social Baseline Report
- Feasibility Phase - Network Analysis

Step 2 Land Reports:

- Land Report 1 - Feasibility Study - Converter Station Site and Route Identification in Ireland and Associated Mapping (All maps associated with this study are available for download via hyperlinks throughout the report)
- Land Report 2

Health:

- The Electrical Grid and Your Health

Project of Common Interest Process:

- Project of Common Interest Information Brochure
- Letter from Competent Authority to EirGrid Approving Concept for Public Participation (2020)
- EirGrid Concept for Public Participation (2020)
- Letter from Competent Authority to EirGrid Acknowledge Project of Common Interest Notification (2019)
- Pre-Application Notification from EirGrid to Competent Authority (2018)