

# Draft 2022 Stakeholder Engagement Report

EirGrid



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# 1 Introduction

This Stakeholder Engagement Report contains a review of EirGrid's stakeholder engagement activities that took place during 2022. We believe that working with stakeholders - customers and industry, the public and local communities - leads to better outcomes and helps to secure the transition to a cleaner energy future.

Our [Stakeholder Engagement Plan for 2022](#) set out our planned engagement activities for the year. It details the purpose of each engagement and the stakeholder groups we wanted to engage with. It outlined how stakeholders could get involved and encouraged more stakeholders to engage with us. Our stakeholder engagement activities in 2022 were informed by a comprehensive consultation process with our stakeholders.

Last year was the third year of our corporate strategy that was launched in September 2019. A fresh approach to stakeholder engagement is one of the pillars of the strategy and this was reflected in how we engaged with a wide range of stakeholders. Effective engagement is essential for EirGrid to achieve our purpose - to transform the power system for future generations.

The aim of this Stakeholder Engagement Report for 2022 is to assess the effectiveness of our engagement during 2022. We also provide a more in-depth look at several areas of engagement under the key goals of our corporate strategy.

Engagement on the "Shaping Our Electricity Future" roadmap continued throughout 2022, building on the activities from the previous year. Our approach to engagement during 2022 was to continue to take the considerable learnings from our "Shaping Our Electricity Future" consultation and seek to maximise all channels available to us.

EirGrid has been tasked to lead the changes in the electricity system that are necessary to respond to the Government's climate change ambitions. This involves increasing the proportion of renewable electricity up to 80% by 2030, with a target of 9 GW from onshore wind, 8 GW from solar, and at least 5 GW of offshore wind energy by then.

This will require a level of change that has not been seen since the roll-out of rural electrification. To achieve this, we need to work in partnership with all our stakeholders. For that reason, meaningful engagement is more important than ever before.

As part of a broader review process, we are publishing this report for consultation. We want to hear from you, our stakeholders, with your views of how we engaged in 2022. We welcome your constructive feedback so we can develop and refine our engagement in future.

## 1.1 Our Engagement Principles

Our key engagement principles are designed so we listen to our stakeholders and take their feedback into consideration to inform better outcomes in our decision making. We want to ensure that customers and stakeholders have their say and that we are listening.

In practice this means that we:

- involve stakeholders early in the process so they can influence plans;
- provide information in plain English that is accessible;
- provide enough time for people to contribute their views;
- offer clear opportunities for engagement and ways to influence the decision-making process;
- explain decisions that need to be taken and factors that influence those decisions; and
- communicate with everyone who has taken the time to engage with us and explain how feedback shaped our eventual decision or approach.

These principles form the basis for all engagement with industry, customers, communities and members of the public.

## 2 Who we are and what we do

### 2.1 Our Role

EirGrid develops, manages and operates the transmission grid and electricity market in Ireland. The grid transports power from where it is generated to where it is needed. It brings power to industry and businesses that use large amounts of electricity.

The grid also powers the distribution network, which supplies the electricity used every day in homes, businesses, schools, hospitals, and farms. We balance supply and demand every minute of the day, while also planning for Ireland's long-term electricity needs.

EirGrid is part of the EirGrid Group, which includes SONI - the transmission system operator for Northern Ireland. The Single Electricity Market Operator (SEMO) is also part of the group, and it runs the wholesale electricity market. This ensures electricity users always have reliable power at a competitive price. We do this in the most cost-effective way possible, in the interests of all electricity users. In October 2022, the Utility Regulator (UR) and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) respectively re-designated SONI and EirGrid as a Nominated Electricity Market Operator (NEMO) in Northern Ireland and Ireland respectively. The NEMOs, working together as SEMOpx, provide day-ahead auctions and intra-day coupling arrangement for trading in the Single Electricity Market.

EirGrid is responsible for developing and operating interconnections with neighbouring grids, such as with National Grid in the UK via the East West Interconnector. Other proposed interconnections include the North South and Celtic Interconnectors. We also enable interconnections developed and operated by third parties, such as the proposed Greenlink Interconnector.

We implement Government and EU policy in Ireland. We act independently and in the public interest.

In May 2021, the Government published the "Policy Statement on the Framework for Ireland's Offshore Electricity Transmission System". This tasked EirGrid with the development and ownership of a new offshore electricity grid. The policy statement identified a centralised offshore transmission system model, with assets to be planned, developed, owned and operated by EirGrid, as delivering maximum societal benefits. We are regulated as a monopoly service provider. We perform our services for the benefit of every electricity user and to support the economy.

### 2.2 The Context in Which We Work

We actively engage with policymakers, industry, and society at all levels, from local to European, in line with our strategic objectives. As stated above, we are also a regulated business, and our engagement takes place within a regulatory environment. Our engagement strategy provides the principles and tools to ensure that, whether we are talking to our customers or local communities, we are clear about our regulatory obligations and our objectives.

## 3 Our 2020-25 Strategy

Our 2020-25 strategy is shaped by two factors; climate change and the transition of the electricity sector to low-carbon, renewable energy. This strategy was informed by extensive engagement with key

stakeholders. These included industry fora, government departments, customers, as well as board members, management and staff from across EirGrid Group.

We have a unique role to play in leading the radical transformation that is required. Our strategy is our response to these challenges. It consists of a set of key goals, underpinned by our purpose to transform the power system for future generations. One of the key goals of our strategy is to engage for better outcomes for all. We recognise the need for continuous engagement with stakeholders, customers and industry. Engagements are a key part of the delivery of our strategy.

Achieving the scale of transformation identified in our strategy requires a significant increase in the scope and frequency of our stakeholder engagement. This review of our engagement in 2022 highlights what we have done during the year and will help us to continue to improve in future years - which is essential for us to deliver our strategy. In the following sections, we outline the engagement activities that took place in 2022 under our key goals.

## 4 Engage for Better Outcomes for All

Our 2020-25 strategy includes a commitment to seek innovative new ways to engage. Our aim is to achieve world-class standards, and to deliver better results.

The Government's 2023 Climate Action Plan confirms the target for renewable-sourced electricity to reach 80% by 2030, which will involve an increase in solar, onshore wind, and offshore wind power.

Achieving this transformation involves a significant increase in the scope and frequency of our stakeholder engagement, making it the foundation of that we do. A key supporting goal of our strategy is to engage for better outcomes for all. We understand the importance of continuous engagement with our stakeholders to deliver our strategy.

The approach to engagement taken during the extensive and comprehensive "Shaping Our Electricity Future" consultation in 2021 resulted in a roadmap with engagement as a key pillar and workstream.

During 2022, we continued to engage with our stakeholders to seek constructive feedback. We welcome the insights we have received through our consultation portal, customer clinics and surveys, citizen roadshows and other formal and informal channels. Over 2022, we have used these insights to continue to enhance our engagement.

Enhancing our stakeholder engagement

Our stakeholder engagement activities in 2022 were informed by a comprehensive consultation process with our stakeholders. The valued feedback which we received in 2021 contributed to the continuous development of our stakeholder engagement activities that will help us meet the challenges over the coming decade.

### 4.1 Key activities for 2022

#### 4.1.1 Continuing to respond and improve:

EirGrid has a strategy that is transforming our public engagement and that builds upon the extensive work over the past decade. We are now working with partners and stakeholders to deliver these improvements. These include local communities, landowners, and industry.

The external context for this new strategy is the urgent need to respond to climate change - and secure our supply of low carbon renewable electricity for future generations. EirGrid has a unique role to play to help deliver this.

As we near the deadline to achieve the 2030 renewables target, our needs will change. Similarly, our approach to public engagement will continue to evolve. We must listen to those who own, work on, and live near future grid infrastructure. Only with their support will we be able to achieve the scale of change required in the next few years.

Over 2022, we have used these insights and recommendations to continue to enhance our engagement to support our vision of always engaging effectively.

#### 4.1.2 Stakeholder engagement developments:

In January 2022, we published our 2022 Stakeholder Engagement Plan for consultation providing a six-week period for our stakeholders to provide feedback. The feedback provided helped shape our engagement activities in 2022.

#### 4.1.3 Dublin Infrastructure Forum

In 2022, EirGrid led the development of the Dublin Infrastructure Forum. This initiative was announced by the Minister for Environmental, Climate and Communications at a high-level briefing in March 2022. The forum membership is made of Chief Executives or their designate from across Government agencies and semi-state bodies who have a remit for delivering infrastructure or relevant supporting economic activity in the greater Dublin area.

A key focus of the forum is to minimise disruption for stakeholders and work as efficiently as possible with other state-owned utilities, transport providers and local authorities. This forum is independently chaired, and its meetings took place in May and September 2022.

Through the forum, advanced ducting opportunities were established with Waterways Ireland, Dublin City Council and the National Transport Authority on the Royal Canal Greenway project.

To support the objectives of the forum at an operation level, three working groups were setup: Technical, Planning and Stakeholder Engagement.

The Technical Working Group met twice in 2022. The main objective is to collaborate and coordinate infrastructure projects in Dublin.

The Planning and Environment Working Group met twice in 2022. The group set out several goals including, sharing an evidence base for infrastructure projects, including maps and case law, exploring a common approach to Exempted Development and reviewing pipeline projects.

The Stakeholder Engagement Working Group met once in 2022. The purpose of the group is to highlight upcoming engagement and consultation activities in Dublin, discuss best practise regarding engagement and to explore any alignment of communications in the future.

The work of the Dublin Infrastructure Forum and the associated working groups have facilitated an expedited project development and engagement schedule.

#### 4.1.4 Consultation Portal:

Following the launch of the consultation portal in 2021, we continued to improve and utilise the new site during 2022. The new site, [consult.eirgrid.ie](https://consult.eirgrid.ie), provides seamless integration with our digital suite and provides exceptional user experience for stakeholders.

Stakeholders can provide their feedback on specific routes and sections of proposed grid projects. Stakeholders can also use the portal to stay up to date on project developments. During 2022, the portal was also used for non-grid project consultations, such as the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Report, PR5 TSO multi-year plan incentives, the Annual Innovation Report and many more.



During 2022, EirGrid continued to develop the portal further, including putting in place mechanisms and processes to ensure consistency and long-term resourcing of the portal. Feedback received as part of the consultation process on the draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2022 was taken into consideration when developing the consultation portal and in the broader redevelopment of the EirGrid website that is currently in train.

Registration for the portal is a one-time process and, once complete, can be used for all EirGrid's online public consultations. Users can make submissions across multiple consultations and save the progress of partially completed submissions to complete later. Feedback on the portal from stakeholders has been positive to date.

#### 4.1.5 Community Forums

EirGrid commenced the rollout of Community Forums across our projects in 2021. This continued in 2022. The role of the Community Forums is to ensure that local communities are brought along the grid development journey as partners. This includes regular and structured direct engagement with the local project team.

As an increasing number of forums are setup at earlier stages of project development, local forum members role in project development is increasing across the board. For example, the Powering Up Dublin Community Forum assisted the project design team in identifying routing constraints across Dublin City and the East Meath North Dublin Community Forum assisted the project design team in assessing pinch-points on route options that were being assessed. In addition to this, forum members regularly provide advice to EirGrid on the specific public consultation, information and engagement campaigns on specific projects - identifying gaps in our stakeholder mapping and introducing the EirGrid team to additional mechanisms for engagement locally.

This activity is in addition to normal public consultation and engagement processes and has been very successful in building trust and relationships with our stakeholders. Feedback on this substantive engagement approach has been complimentary from forum members and local authority members.

Membership of the forums are made up of representatives of local community groups, local county councillors and chamber of commerce members. Each community forum is independently chaired, generally by a reputable NGO or community engagement specialist. The independent chair reinforces accountability and ensures that engagement is not tokenistic.

In addition to the project development process, the forums ensure that the priorities of each community benefit scheme reflect the priorities of each local community.

A summary of Community Forum activity in 2022 is included below:

Project	# Meetings	# Members	Summary of activity	Summary of objectives achieved
<b>Celtic Interconnector</b>	4	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular project updates and progress on the planning application were provided at each meeting.</li> <li>Two workshops took place to inform the design of the community benefit scheme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work commenced with the forum on the development of the Community Benefit Strategy.</li> <li>A public consultation process on the strategy was commenced and overseen by the forum.</li> </ul>

<b>Clashavoon Dunmanway</b>	1	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update provided on the allocation of the community benefit fund was provided to members. There were no further meetings required in 2022.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site visit to some projects who received funding took place in March 2022.</li> <li>Lessons learned document on the community benefit fund application process compiled based on member feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>Powering Up Dublin</b>	2	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forum was setup in Q4 2022 with members were recruited from across the project area.</li> <li>The project was introduced, and a detailed constraints mapping exercise of the project area was undertaken with forum members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The constraints mapping exercise fed back to the design team to consider when planning the route design.</li> <li>Advice was provided to the project team on how to approach the consultation phase in 2023.</li> </ul>
<b>East Meath North Dublin</b>	6	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The forum was established in Q3 2022, with forum members recruited from across the project area and a terms of reference for the forum was agreed.</li> <li>The project was introduced, and the forum were actively involved in the oversight of the public consultation process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mapping of the 4 proposed routes in project area with extensive feedback given on local constraints, hot spots to avoid and significant local knowledge.</li> <li>Forum members kept an overview of the public consultation, receiving regular updates and providing feedback throughout.</li> </ul>
<b>Kildare Meath</b>	3	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular project updates were provided at each meeting, including progress on the best performing route.</li> <li>Mapping of forum members to ensure the project area has representation across all impacted areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As the project route emerged, new members joined, and some members naturally left the forum as the project route was not impacting their area anymore.</li> <li>Forum members were thanked for their work to date and the forum commenced capacity building in preparation for the community benefit scheme.</li> </ul>

<b>Laois Kilkenny</b>	4	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A multi-agency capacity building workshop took place in collaboration with the Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland and the Kilkenny Leader Partnership. This workshop explored the range of funding streams available to community groups.</li> <li>• Regular project updates were provided at each meeting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive networking took place at the first in person forum meeting and community groups received additional information on leveraging other funds available to them.</li> <li>• The forum was paramount in spreading the word on the opening of phase 1 of the community benefit fund.</li> </ul>
<b>North Connacht</b>	3	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular project updates were provided at each meeting.</li> <li>• Capacity building and networking took place at forum meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A workshop on the Sustainable Development goals took place.</li> <li>• An overview of the community benefit approach on other projects was provided.</li> </ul>

#### 4.1.6 Community Benefit

Our enhanced Community Benefit Policy recognises the importance of the local communities who support our work. Under this initiative, we create a community benefit scheme in proportion to the scale of the project. The local community benefit scheme is overseen by the local project Community Forum to ensure that the scheme is designed for the local community, by the local community.

## Community Benefit Fund 2022



Clashavoon  
Dunmanway

**36** Projects  
to date

**€600,000**

Development of community, sports and youth facilities.  
Support to heritage, enterprise initiatives and older people.

- Rusheen
- Macrom
- Tirelton
- Kilmichael
- Coppeen
- Dunmanway
- Aghinagh
- Carrigadrohid
- Killmurry



Laois  
Kilkenny

**13** Projects  
to date

**€204,600** PHASE 1

Development of community spaces and sports facilities.  
Support to old and young people.

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| <b>Laois</b>  | <b>Kilkenny</b> |
| • Spink       | • Ballyragget   |
| • Ballyroan   | • Ballyouskill  |
| • Ballinakill |                 |

## 2022 Community Engagement Update Deployed across Network Delivery Plan

### Rollout of Community Forums

Project	Step	Membership
Laois Kilkenny	6	9
Clashavoon Dunmanway	6	28
Celtic Interconnector	5	18
Kildare Meath	4	17
North Connacht	5	15
North Dublin East Meath	4	18
Powering Up Dublin	4	25

### Rollout of Community Benefit

Project	Update
Laois Kilkenny Phase 1 of 3	€204,600 awarded
Clashavoon Dunmanway	€600,000 awarded
Celtic Interconnector	Strategy being developed
Kilpadogue Knockanure	Evaluation report being prepared.

### Progress on Partnerships

Project	Update
MaREI	Researchers observing community forum meetings and community benefit activity across projects. Project stakeholders participating in interviews.
Friends of the Earth/YSI	2 'Our Energy Future' events held focusing on Energy Poverty and Co-existence of Biodiversity and the Delivery of Renewable Energy
Young Social Innovators	Climate Action and Energy category established. Support being provided on increasing number of projects in this area.

This year saw many communities benefitting across a number of EirGrid projects:

- In 2022, communities in Clashavoon - Dunmanway in East Cork began the drawdown of funding, following the award of a €600,000 community benefit fund in late 2021.

- Community groups and non-profit organisations in Laois and Kilkenny were awarded €204,600, the first of three phases of funding available in the areas adjacent to this key project.
- The Celtic Interconnector Community Forum commenced development of its community benefit strategy for its €2.4m fund. By Christmas, over 300 stakeholder submissions had been received. The strategy is expected to be published by April, with the first phase of funding released for applications in June 2023.
- Case studies of community benefit projects can be found in Appendix 2

#### 4.1.7 Engagement channels and tools:

##### 4.1.7.1 *Community Benefit Grant Application System*

As part of improvements to our approach to community benefit, EirGrid trialled a new grant application system through our partners, on the Clashavoon Dunmanway and Laois Kilkenny Community Funds in 2021. This system was further enhanced in 2022 to include a single portal point covering the application process, evidence submission, evaluation reporting, change requests and contract exchange. The system has introduced additional efficiencies in administration and provided an improved user experience based on feedback from applicants. This system will be rolled out across all future community benefit schemes.

##### 4.1.7.2 *Customer feedback:*

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, the customer and connections team conducts an annual survey to gather structured feedback from our external customers on their experiences of engaging with EirGrid.

This feedback is very important and enables us to continue to improve and enhance our stakeholder engagement and drive customer service improvements where possible.

The 2021 survey took place in Q1 2022 and the feedback helped shape our approach during the year. EirGrid has since implemented improvements directly linked to topics that were raised in the survey. The primary themes were access to information, meetings, and wind dispatch down. From the feedback provided through the survey, EirGrid have implemented a number of changes as a result:

Clearer Communications Around Outages:

- Increased Transmission Outage Communication with introduction of weekly circulation of week-ahead transmission outage report to interested customers - the “Voluntary Outage Summary Report”.
- Additional subject matter expert resources allocated to monthly industry meeting with respect to dispatch down and transmission outages.
- Regular bilateral meetings targeted at customers experiencing increased dispatch down because of transmission outages. Subject matter experts attended these meeting to explain impacts.

Engagement with Industry Representatives

- Re-engaged bilateral meetings with Demand Response Association of Ireland (DRAI), resulting in improved access to EirGrid information and resources.
- Increased bilateral engagement with Wind Energy Ireland with respect to outage information.

- There is a new, separate executive and working-level quarterly meeting with Irish Solar Energy Association.

#### Website Improvements

- Input from survey is being used to inform the new website project. The Customer Team lead is actively involved in the project.

We are always looking at ways to improve our engagement and believe this annual survey is an important step on our pathway to measure the effectiveness of our engagement and inform the key focus areas for future years. The 2022 survey is ongoing, the findings from this survey will be published later this year.

#### 4.1.7.3 *Customer Relationship Management Tool*

The EirGrid Customer and Connection Team introduced a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool, which has been rolled out across the organisation on a phased basis throughout 2022. The tool supports the effective management and engagement of customers and stakeholders across the business.

It provides a central repository for customer engagement information; enhances query management activities; and promotes collaboration and consistent, transparent and accountable customer engagement.

#### 4.1.7.4 *Customer Clinics*

To ensure we are engaging effectively with customers, the customer and connection team, alongside members of technical disciplines within EirGrid, facilitate customer clinics. The aim is to meet new and current customers and discuss their needs and answer any questions they may have.

During the year the team established quarterly and monthly clinics with stakeholders to ensure an open dialogue is maintained and the stakeholders are always engaged and informed.

There was a total of 56 clinics throughout 2022. Notable attendees were representatives from the green Hydrogen industry, prospective offshore and onshore wind developers, and battery storage projects.

Engagements were sought by a number of prospective datacentre customers, looking for EirGrid's input on planning applications for dispatchable on-site generation, as per direction CRU/21/124.

EirGrid engaged with developers of large scale solar and onshore wind projects that were in the early, scoping stages relating to the viability of connection.

The clinics also provided support and guidance regarding the submission of planning for new generation sites.

### 4.1.8 *Shaping Our Electricity Future*

Shaping Our Electricity Future was one of the most extensive and comprehensive consultations in any sector over the last number of decades. We learned a lot from both the public stakeholders and from industry stakeholders. These learnings shaped the work carried out during 2022.

During the year, we embedded our new consultation and engagement toolkit within the "Framework for Grid Development", putting communities at the heart of grid development. Some of the most significant initiatives were the EirGrid Energy Citizens Roadshow, the EirGrid and Young Social Innovators Partnership, the establishment of the Shaping Our Electricity Future Advisory Council and a partnership with Friends of the Earth and RGI.

#### 4.1.9 EirGrid's National Advisory Committee (NAC)

EirGrid recognises the need to obtain feedback on our work from a cross section of Irish society and economy as this informs our approach to engagement going forward. Working with Irish Rural Link, the NAC met three times in 2022. It is comprised of external stakeholders from national groups which have key relevance to the work of EirGrid. The NAC advises EirGrid in relation to several areas that are critical to the development of the grid.

In 2022, the National Advisory Committee addressed a number of key areas that were under consideration by EirGrid and provided feedback reflecting the diverse stakeholder backgrounds.

Topics considered at the meetings in 2022 included Shaping Our Electricity Future, the Powering Up Dublin Project, EirGrid's Science Based Sustainability Strategy, our broader engagement strategy, and more recently, in December, the next iteration of EirGrid's Shaping Our Electricity Future (version 1.1).

The feedback provided has helped to hone the various plans that EirGrid are developing and take guidance from each stakeholder perspective.

As facilitator, Irish Rural Link ensures that meetings provide a forum for open discussion on key topics which will help to inform EirGrid's decision-making process.

# 5 Lead the Island's Electricity Sector on Sustainability and Decarbonisation

## 5.1 Group Sustainability Strategy

EirGrid's primary goal to lead the island's electricity sector on sustainability and decarbonisation and places sustainability at its core. We also have an internal goal to embed sustainability across all areas of the business. A key milestone achieved in 2022 was the launch of our new Group Sustainability Strategy. This is an ambitious strategy to embed sustainability across EirGrid Group and was developed with stakeholder input.

This strategy was developed following an extensive review and consultation process, involving a broad range of internal and external stakeholders and is structured around a key set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Over the last 12 months, our focus has been on embedding this strategy across the Group and we are proud of the progress and achievements registered over this period.

Our sustainability journey is guided by three key pillars:

- Driving climate action and transformation of the electricity system
- Committed to a sustainable society
- Being a responsible business

The first pillar is focused on 'what we do' as a Group and our core contribution to the transformation of the power system and the overarching climate challenge. The other two pillars highlight that whilst achieving this outcome is critical, it's 'how we do it' that will determine the net benefit to society and ensure that sustainability is embedded into all our activities.

A key part of the development of our strategy was the determination of "Science Based Targets" for the EirGrid Group which we had verified by the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTI) in 2022. Science-based targets provide a clearly defined pathway for companies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Targets are considered "science-based" if they are in line with what the latest science deems necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement - limiting global warming to well-below 2c above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit warming to 1.5c.

## 5.2 Corporate Social Responsibility

Removing barriers to education is a core focus of EirGrid's community investment strategy.

EirGrid continued its work with Margaret Aylward Community College through Business in the Community Ireland. EirGrid volunteers mentored sixth year students.

In addition, EirGrid continued its partnership with SciFest. SciFest@School is a second-level programme promoting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) education by providing a forum for students to present and display their scientific investigations.

In 2022, 1,200 students at schools around the country participated in the qualifying rounds and were awarded prizes. There were 14 overall winners of the "EirGrid Climate and Delivering a Cleaner Energy Future Award".



## 5.3 Business Working Responsibly Mark

EirGrid is proud to have continuously held the Business Working Responsibly (BWR) Mark since 2012. The mark, which is based on ISO 26000, was developed by Business in the Community and is audited by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI). It is an independent verification that we carry out our business in a sustainable and responsible way.

The triennial certification process assesses our performance with respect to how we interact with the marketplace, the workplace, the environment, the community and our corporate responsibility/sustainability governance.

In October, Business in the Community confirmed that EirGrid Group was successfully recertified to the BWR Mark, with certification valid to October 2025. This was the concluding step in a lengthy recertification process, one which required support from across the organisation to bring to a successful conclusion.

In its audit report, Business in the Community noted:

- A new Community Benefits Policy has been published and the company recognises communities who support work under three funding streams:
  - Sustainability
  - Community
  - Biodiversity
- The company take a Lessons Learned approach to stakeholder engagement with previous lessons learned in relation to the use of plain English and the use of local media.
- The national advisory committee meets bi-annually to review the approach to stakeholder engagement.

The auditors also stated that “there appears to be a stronger focus on climate change adaptation than there appears to be in other organisations.”

## 5.4 Sponsorship

Through our sponsorship and corporate social responsibility initiatives, EirGrid interacts with communities around the country.

These activities complement our community funds and enable us to support a range of worthy causes throughout the length and breadth of Ireland. Some of the highlights for 2022:

- Hinterland Festival - Continued to support the annual Hinterland multi-disciplinary arts festival in Kells, Meath.
- Dunboyne Athletic Club - EirGrid has supported the Dunboyne 10k Road Race for the past nine years. The event has been taking place in the Meath village for over 50 years is a true community event, attracting runners of all abilities.
- University College Cork - Supported the upgrade of electrical power laboratories at University College Cork
- Agricultural Shows - Sponsored the 79th Virginia show in Cavan and the Bonnicconlon Agricultural Show in Mayo.
- Charities - Financial support was also provided to a number of national charity organisations.

In 2022 we also:

- Continued to participate in Business in the Community Ireland's "Low Carbon Economy" Leaders' Group. EirGrid Chief Executive Mark Foley co-chairs this group, the purpose of which is to support and encourage businesses to lead the transition to a low-carbon economy.
- Developed our approach to annual sustainability reporting in order to engage stakeholders in our sustainability journey, communicating our progress and demonstrating our leadership.
- Engaged with Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) , NewERA and SEAL in the context of increased public sector contribution highlighted in the Climate Action Plan and the planned commercial state framework.
- Engaged with the SBTi as our targets go through the validation process in early 2022.

## 5.5 Energy Policy and Thought Leadership

EirGrid Group is uniquely positioned to lead the island's electricity sector on sustainability and decarbonisation and to be a trusted, independent advisor to policy makers in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Europe through use of our deep expertise, knowledge and data.

## 5.6 Climate Action Plan 2023

EirGrid provided key support to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in its emissions analysis for the Climate Action Plan (CAP) 23.

This was a complex, high-profile analysis requested by DECC, recognising EirGrid's subject matter expertise. The work underpinned much of the analysis behind CAP23.

The programme of work required the diversion of subject matter experts from the company to complete the analysis in a very short timeline.

The primary purpose of the exercise was to develop prospective carbon emission budget compliant pathways for a range of scenarios, as requested by DECC as part of its CAP23 preparations.

The analysis was aimed at understanding the likely impact on emissions caused by a changing electricity sector over the coming years. These changes include the uptake of renewable and conventional generation; increased demand; growth in storage capacity; and renewable gas.

The analysis was based on scenarios requested by DECC, with a plan-led approach rather than developer-led approach implicit in the analysis.

The approach was based on a commercial software methodology, albeit focussed on emissions, and relied on technical parameters and methods used by the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSOE).

The results were validated against the Energy Transmission Model (ETM), academia, and peer analysis.

In 2022 we:

- Continued to consistently communicate with the DECC in relation to the delivery of our actions under the CAP and provide regular reports on progress.
- Continued to engage with the stakeholders who are providing input and supporting us to deliver on the CAP deliverables where we are acting as lead stakeholder, e.g. actions associated with integration of renewables, offshore wind, system services and interconnection development.
- Continued to provide input and support the lead stakeholders, as identified in the CAP, in the delivery of other CAP deliverables where EirGrid is identified as a key stakeholder, e.g. actions

associated with Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) and RESS auctions, facilitation of renewables connection policy and facilitation of hybrid connections.

- Continued to proactively seek opportunities to feed our perspective and thought leadership into policy development across Government.
- Continued to identify opportunities to engage with a broader stakeholder audience across industry and society on the developments we foresee as required to support climate and energy goals.
- Continued to work closely with DECC and the CRU to ensure that the key decision makers in Europe understand our pioneering efforts to facilitate electricity from renewable sources and the solutions that are required to meet the associated challenges.

## 5.7 Implementing the Shaping Our Electricity Future Roadmap

Following an extensive six-month engagement and consultation period gathering views from the economy, society and industry, EirGrid launched the Shaping Our Electricity Future Roadmap in November 2021 at the 26th meeting of the Conferences of Parties (COP26).

This included detailed actions that are required in order to deliver the 2030 targets and the roadmap will be a critical component of Ireland's response to climate change. Since then, EirGrid has been working on the delivery of those actions in conjunction with our stakeholders. We have also been considering the changes to Government Policy since the roadmap was developed.

We learned a lot from our engagements in 2021 both from the public stakeholders (academics, advocacy organisations, civil society and the general public) and from industry stakeholders (developers, investors, lobbyists and suppliers). During 2022, we implemented learning and continued to incorporate the feedback we received from public and industry stakeholders into our engagement activities.

## Engagement during 2022:

### 5.7.1 Shaping Our Electricity Future v1.1

In Ireland the requirement changed from 70% of electricity from renewable sources by 2030 to 80%. Economy wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings for the electricity sector were also introduced. EirGrid commenced an update to Shaping Our Electricity Future to reflect these changes which is ongoing whilst the current roadmap is being progressed. This will build on the work done for the initial roadmap, taking into account the increase in renewable targets and the emission limits in Ireland.

As part of this we engaged with two stakeholder groups through a call for inputs from the energy industry and academia in July 2022. This ran for a period of six weeks, and we received 29 responses across Ireland and Northern Ireland.

We are now carrying out analysis using the updated targets, and inputs received from industry and academia. This analysis will show the emission pathway to 2030 and how the renewable targets can be met. This will result in an update to the multi-year plans for the four pillars of the Shaping Our Electricity Roadmap - Networks, Engagement, Markets and Operations. The network reinforcements required to meet the targets in 2030 will be updated if needed.

### 5.7.2 EirGrid Energy Citizens Roadshow

In May 2022, EirGrid embarked on a series of Energy Citizens Roadshow events aimed at informing local communities on how the organisation plans to future-proof the electricity grid, as well as connecting the dots about microgeneration, home retrofitting, energy upgrades and regional energy development issues. Over the year, 13 Roadshows were held across Donegal, Sligo, Westmeath, Dublin, Wicklow and Cork.

Our national partners are Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and ESB Networks. We also worked with regional partners - the Western Development Commission, Wicklow County Council, Codema - Dublin's Energy Agency, Youghal Blue and Green Community Network, Cork City Council - Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí, Donegal PPN, Sligo PPN, Westmeath PPN, Dublin City PPN, DLR PPN, Cork County PPN, Cork City PPN and numerous exhibitors.

The events received widespread advertising, media and public relations support.

During 2022, over 1,000 stakeholders have participated in the events, including members of the public, community organisations, business associations and the farming community. These roadshows are helping enhance our understanding of communities' attitudes towards hosting grid infrastructure and their ambitions to play a part in the climate transition - down to the energy they use every day.

Participants at the roadshows have expressed a wide range of views in relation to the future of the energy system and climate action on community level. Relevant to EirGrid, many participants expressed their views on future renewable energy targets, their desire to see expedited grid development and the importance of bringing communities along the journey to achieving targets. In addition to this, participants also highlighted concerns in relation to security of supply, the impact of the war in Ukraine on our electricity system and challenges in relation to delivering the required grid infrastructure quickly enough. This has enhanced our knowledge of the priorities and perspectives of stakeholders.

### 5.7.3 EirGrid and Young Social Innovators Partnership

In February EirGrid began a three-year partnership with non-profit organisation Young Social Innovators (YSI).

This new partnership followed our commitment in the Shaping Our Electricity Future Roadmap in 2021 to partner with a youth organisation that has a national reach to deliver awareness programmes and initiatives on transitioning Ireland to a cleaner energy future. The collaboration saw EirGrid become the new Climate Action and Energy partner with YSI for a three-year period.

YSI empowers and supports young people to develop and implement innovative ideas to bring about positive social change for the benefit of people, communities and the environment. Over the past 20 years, some 150,000 teenagers have taken part in YSI's social innovation programmes in post primary schools nationally.

Under the partnership, a "Climate Action and Energy" award was created for the Young Social Innovators of the Year Ireland Awards 2022. The award recognises young people's efforts to innovate around climate action and energy and empowers and engage them in being a vital part of the solutions needed. The inaugural award was won by Abbey Vocational School in Donegal Town.

This partnership is delivering a greater awareness among young people for the need for grid development and EirGrid's role within the electricity system. Key performance indicators for this partnership also include the raising of the number of projects in the 'climate action and energy' category year on year.

This partnership builds on our collaboration with the National Youth Council of Ireland in 2021 in delivering a national youth assembly on shaping our electricity future.

### 5.7.4 Shaping Our Electricity Future Advisory Council

As a result of the stakeholder feedback received throughout the Shaping Our Electricity Future ("SOEF") engagement process, EirGrid and SONI assessed potential options for facilitating ongoing industry

engagement on the issues, challenges and activities set out in the SOEF Roadmap. Delivery of the Renewable Ambition relies on effective communication and coordinated efforts of many stakeholders in our industry. In response to the feedback received, the Shaping Our Electricity Future Advisory Council was established in 2022.

The Shaping Our Electricity Future Advisory Council was established in 2022 as a multi-disciplinary group of representatives from across the Irish energy ecosystem including industry, government, regulatory, consulting, and utilities. The focus of the Council is to facilitate understanding and communication on the SOEF strategic goals and how those can be best be delivered. These SOEF strategic goals are aligned with the governments' climate action goals for increased renewables integration and EirGrid Group's strategic goal of achieving world-leading levels of SNSP.

The Council is chaired by EirGrid's Chief Innovation and Planning Officer, Liam Ryan, and meets regularly throughout the year.

The Council members are electricity market participants, local and neighbouring electricity network utilities, emerging grid technology companies and industry consultants. Through the Advisory Council meetings, the Members are able to share their ideas and needs for the future of the transmission system and energy markets with the EirGrid Group and representatives from the governments and regulatory authorities of Northern Ireland and Ireland. They also provide feedback on EirGrid Group's multi-year plans for achieving the SOEF Goals. Material from the Advisory Council sessions is published on our websites within a few days of each meeting so that it is available to all other interested stakeholders.

The input and feedback from the Council members, and thus the broader Irish energy ecosystem, is critical to the successful delivery of the SOEF strategic goals. Indeed, this has proven true as the Advisory Council members have shared their considerable knowledge and thought leadership on a variety of topics, including the Acceleration of Decarbonisation and Storage Services Procurement Frameworks. The Advisory Council met twice in 2022 and has already met twice in 2023, with more meetings planned.

The EirGrid Group looks forward to continuing our engagement with the SOEF Advisory Council, increasing the understanding and communication amongst the Irish energy ecosystem, and working to deliver on Shaping Our Electricity Future towards the mutually beneficial and shared goals expressed in the climate action plans and strategic grid and market advancements.

#### 5.7.5 Friends of the Earth and RGI

In late 2021, EirGrid partnered with Friends of the Earth and the Renewable Grid Initiative (RGI), which is comprised of TSOs and NGOs from across Europe, to facilitate inclusive discussions with communities, civil society organisations, local groups, and other stakeholders.

The initiative followed feedback received during the Shaping Our Electricity Future consultation and represents a newer, innovative way of engaging with communities.

The three-year project supports diverse and open dialogues on the challenges and opportunities associated with Ireland's energy transformation, from development of grid infrastructure to the need for a decarbonised, secure and affordable electricity, with a much higher share of community participation.

The partnership with Friends of the Earth and RGI provides a unique opportunity to join together with two organisations that continually strive to promote and exhibit clear, equitable and transparent engagement.

In 2022, Friends of the Earth began reaching out to organisations across Ireland to involve them in discussions and kicked off a series of engagement events:

In June, Friends of the Earth gathered 20 groups from across Ireland in a workshop to ask: "How can Ireland deliver a proactive and inclusive response to the energy price crisis while supporting communities in the energy transition?". Participants explored the impacts of increasing energy costs, as well as barriers and opportunities for households and communities to engage in the energy transition.

In October, another workshop took place to ask: "How can Ireland better protect the environment and biodiversity while ensuring necessary infrastructure to meet climate and renewables targets?".

Participants discussed issues relating to environmental impacts of renewables, changes to the planning system, as well as the impact of offshore wind on Marine Protected Areas, and civil society participants got the opportunity to engage with state and industry stakeholders on these issues.

#### 5.7.6 Other 2022 Shaping Our Electricity Future Engagement Activities:

- Continued engagement with individual local authorities and regional assemblies on future grid needs in their area, including Climate Action Regional Offices.
- Continued to engage with communities across Ireland via project community forums on projects in collaboration with the community and voluntary sector.
- Significant progress was made in developing a new EirGrid website that will enable communities explore queries in relation to the grid. At time of publication the organisation is working through stage two of a three stage project process. Based on user experience, the new website will prioritise ease of navigation, publication retrieval and information for the general public about the role and remit of EirGrid.

## 5.8 European Engagements

In 2022, EirGrid continued its engagement at EU level across various strands. Engagement continued with Directorate-General for Energy (DG ENER) and within ENTSOE and its Committee structure. EirGrid's Chief Innovation and Planning Officer Liam Ryan continued to serve as Vice-Chair of ENTSOE and played a central role in the work to proceed with the emergency synchronisation of the Ukrainian-Moldovan power system with the Continental Europe power system in March 2022.

In 2022, EirGrid, along with other TSOs from around EU, joined the OCEaN Coalition. OCEaN is a coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), wind industry actors and TSOs that cooperate to accelerate the deployment of offshore wind energy and grid infrastructure while ensuring alignment with nature protection and healthy marine ecosystems.

In September, the consultation and engagement process of Shaping Our Electricity Future was recognised at EU level with the award of the RGI 2022 'Good Practice of the Year' award in the 'Communications and Engagement' category.

The judging panel was chaired by a senior official from DG ENER and the award was presented by EU Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson. Deliberative participatory approaches, effective nature restoration and decarbonisation of transport recognised at RGI's 2022 'Good Practice of the Year' award (renewables-grid.eu). The awards were presented at an EU Commission event, at which the Celtic Interconnector project featured prominently.

In October, EirGrid led a public engagement and community benefit workshop in Wurzburg, Germany with TSOs and NGOs from across Europe. This event was organised by RGI in collaboration with TransnetBW.

In December, EirGrid and RTE France held an event in the Irish Embassy in Paris to mark the signing of contracts for the Celtic Interconnector project. The signing was observed by An Taoiseach, Minister Eamon Ryan, the French Energy Minister, a Vice-President of the European Investment Bank, and the Deputy Secretary General of DG ENER.

# 6 Operate, Develop and Enhance the All-island Grid & Market

## 6.1 Delivering Grid Infrastructure

Asking landowners and local communities to accept new infrastructure has never been an easy task.

Our grid development projects will affect multiple communities and stakeholder groups over a number of years. We never take decisions requiring new infrastructure lightly, or without first investigating all alternative solutions. Where new infrastructure is essential, we need to inform and persuade landowners and communities. Incorporating public feedback is critical to the delivery of energy infrastructure. It allows EirGrid to make better and more informed decisions.

It is critical that we make consistent efforts to facilitate effective stakeholder participation in decision-making as these projects develop. This will allow us to answer queries, address concerns and build understanding and support for these projects. We will also learn how the project may affect host communities which will inform what we do to address this.

In our Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2022, we outlined our intention to engage on a range of projects including:

1. North Connacht 11K V Project
2. North South 400 kV Interconnector Project
3. Laois-Kilkenny Reinforcement Project
4. Celtic Interconnector
5. East Meath to North Dublin Reinforcement
6. Kildare - Meath Grid Upgrade

An overview of our engagement approach, impact and lessons learned on our projects is set out below. Further information on the engagement on each specific project is provided in Appendix 1

### 6.1.1 Public Engagement Approach

We use a consistent, six-step public engagement process to explore options and make decisions. This means we follow the same steps for every project. It ensures we are identifying stakeholders and giving them an opportunity to shape the proposals as early as possible. The decision-making tools we use and the amount of engagement we carry out at each step depends on the scale and complexity of each project. The level of stakeholder engagement is dependent on the type of project.

EirGrid's approach to engagement is tailored to a specific project or initiative. A bespoke engagement plan is developed for each project, the plan identifies the best channels to provide information to stakeholders. This included emails to customers and stakeholders, 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 phonelines and conducting webinars.

Stakeholders were invited to provide feedback in multiple formats including feedback forms online and at open days, through for a and webinars and by email or letter. Stakeholders can also engage directly with the dedicated community liaison officer or agriculture liaison officer for each grid development project.

### 6.1.2 Landowner Engagement

The landowner team have been engaging with landowners across a wide range of transmission infrastructure projects during 2022 ranging from works to existing lines to proposals for new circuits.



For those landowners who host existing overhead lines which have been identified for refurbishment and uprating, we meet to explain the works required, anticipated timeframes and seek access to carry out survey works on the lands to help inform the extent of works required.

For new build projects, we engage with potential landowners at the earliest stages possible. For example on new circuits, where we have a number of potential options proposed, this early feedback forms an important part of the overall consideration in the evaluation of options. This approach ensures that the specific local knowledge of the land and any associated constraints can be understood ahead of any further decision making.

The team are also involved in discussing proposals with landowners in relation to requirements for the development of new substations or the enhancement of existing stations.

### 6.1.3 Learnings

Learnings from individual infrastructure projects are reviewed and incorporated to improve our engagement on subsequent infrastructure projects to ensure the benefits of learnings identified are realised in future engagement. A complete set of learnings from our grid development engagement over 2022 is included in Appendix 1 following the individual project updates.

The role of consultation in infrastructure development is evolving and requires continual focus and development. Building on successes achieved through consultation is key to the evolution of consultation. These include, for example, nurturing community relationships and understanding community ambitions.

## 6.2 Offshore

EirGrid recognises the key role that offshore wind will play in meeting Ireland's energy needs and in the Irish economy in the next decade and beyond. We are strongly supporting the Government's ambition through our collaboration with our key stakeholders and industry, and through the work being undertaken in the organisation. We are also playing a leading part in transitioning the electricity system to accommodate offshore wind onto our grid and into the electricity market. EirGrid has established a specific offshore project team with dedicated expertise. We have also completed our Offshore Asset Readiness Roadmap to prepare for our asset ownership role and continued the implementation of our offshore engagement strategy.

EirGrid is planning for 5GW of offshore wind generation being connected to the Irish electricity grid by 2030. The first phase of delivery will be based off the east and west coasts of Ireland with further offshore generation opportunities on the south in the second phase.

This is an ambitious goal and meeting these targets requires simultaneous development of various policy, legislative and regulatory workstreams. Many of these workstreams are ongoing and EirGrid is continuing to work closely with DECC and CRU in supporting their development.

During 2022, we engaged with the CRU to provide position papers to them in order to inform their consultations on offshore grid connections and conducted extensive industry engagement. In May 2022 we received applications for 4.4GW of offshore wind and have issued key technical specifications and connection information to the Phase 1 developers.

There has been significant progress made during the year to advance the development of offshore wind in Ireland. EirGrid consulted regularly with key stakeholders throughout the year.

- There was particular focus during the year on ensuring that the developers of Phase 1 projects are ready to participate in the first Offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS).
- Engagement continued with offshore customers as the momentum increases in this sector towards project delivery. Offshore engagement workshops were held in 2022 along with technical workshops with Phase 1 offshore developers.



- EirGrid continues to work closely with developers, Wind Energy Ireland and other stakeholders on the technical and commercial aspects of grid connections.
- EirGrid supported DECC in the development of the requirements for the first ORESS auction in advance of the auction being run this year. Support was provided to DECC through the development of functional specifications for the offshore transmission assets and the progression of Grid Connection Assessments for these projects.

## 6.3 Security of Supply

Over the last two years, we have seen an increasing number of System Alerts (formerly known as Amber Alerts) on the electricity system. System Alerts are triggered when the generating margin has tightened to a level where EirGrid begins taking additional actions to protect security of supply.

These actions can include maximising the dispatch of all conventional and energy limited plant and undertaking trades on the electricity interconnectors to reduce exports or reverse flows so that we are importing, contributing to security of supply.

While the return of some generators from forced outages have improved the margins on the electricity system in the short term, there remains a need to proactively address declining capacity margins in coming years. For this reason, EirGrid is engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that security of supply risks are mitigated to the best extent possible.

During the summer EirGrid began publishing the “Systems Margins Outlook”. This is a twice-weekly report that provides an early warning signal of system tightness for demand customers. This initiative was developed in response to customer need and requests.

It provides a warning to customers when the system is tight; Demand Side Units (DSU) are likely to be dispatched; and mandatory demand curtailment (MDC) may be invoked.

At the end of August, there was an initial release of the “Systems Margins Outlook” issued to MDC customers and ESB MDC customers from [info@eirgrid.com](mailto:info@eirgrid.com). This was done on a pilot basis and included a call for feedback to ensure that the report provided the level of information that was useful and supportive.

This report is now sent to market participants and MDC customers with a final version published on the SEMO website every Monday and Friday at 2.00pm. There may be ad hoc issuances to reflect rapid changes in generator availability and wind forecast.

In 2022 we:

- Worked closely with the CRU and DECC to implement a coordinated approach to address Security of Supply challenges in Ireland in the short- to medium term, as well as measures to address security in the longer-term.
- Engaged the operators of existing conventional units to increase the availability and reliability of the units in the short- to medium term.
- Published updated outlooks on short- and longer-term security of supply through the Winter Outlook and Generation Capacity Statement.
- Reviewed and enhanced coordinated plans for demand control under a System Emergency with our ESB Networks.
- Reviewed and enhanced coordinated emergency communication plans through a review of our Power System Emergency Communications Plan, coordinated crisis messaging plans, and joint multi-stakeholder exercises.
- Successfully engaged with our large customers on the implementation of mandatory demand control.

- Engaged with the relevant parties to achieve and effectively communicate the above, including the EPA, IDA, SEMC, GNI, and relevant industry sector bodies.

## 6.4 Asset Management

EirGrid has an asset management and maintenance role and is responsible for setting maintenance policy and standards which is comprised of policies for maintenance, replacement and refurbishment of the assets forming part of the transmission system.

The transmission system comprises over 7,000 km of overhead line, 350 km of underground cable and over 170 substations containing transmission assets. EirGrid plans and manages the maintenance programme and ESB Networks, as Transmission Asset Owner (TAO), carries out the physical maintenance work.

EirGrid in conjunction with ESB Networks as TAO is also responsible for assessing asset condition and making the decision to invest in either refurbishing or replacing assets.

As part of Price Review 5, an asset refurbishment plan was submitted to the CRU which covers the period 2021 to 2025. Stakeholder engagement was carried out during 2022 on these asset refurbishment and replacement projects.

In 2022 we achieved approval to progress with the replacement of all the fluid-filled cable replacement projects in the capital. These projects are now with EirGrid's Powering Up Dublin programme team to progress.

We continued to engage through a broad spectrum of methods, including one-to-one engagements with specific customers and industry representative bodies, formal engagement processes and panels, industry fora, publications and workshops on a range of topics.

Earlier in the year, EirGrid published for consultation a new version of the Balancing Market Principles Statement. The document aims to increase awareness and visibility of the transmission system operator's scheduling and dispatch processes. The purpose of the consultation was to present a number of revisions to the Balancing Market Principles Statement and to seek feedback on them.

## 6.5 Innovation

Early in 2022 EirGrid and SONI published a consultation on the Annual Innovation Report.

The Innovation Report outlined innovative projects worked on in 2021 and included our ambition for developing these projects further in the coming years.

In addition to this we shared our intent for future initiatives planned over the coming years. The intent includes both projects already agreed under the PR5 funding, as well as proposals for new strategic innovation programmes, identified from our refreshed innovation strategy.

We sought to actively engage with stakeholders on our future innovation programmes to help guide the direction of the programmes, and ensure they are supported by our key stakeholders.

The consultation ran from mid-February to mid-March 2022, utilising the new consultation portal, and for transparency, the full submissions were made available for viewing.

Overall, there was support for the projects shared in the report and agreement with the next steps proposed. There were no responses to the consultation that disagreed with the work done, or direction proposed, with the majority of comments wanting more to be done and faster.

This aligns closely with EirGrid and SONI's view that innovation is critical to delivering on our ambition to 2030 and beyond as outlined in our Innovation and Research Strategy, published in December 2021.

# 7 Work with partners for positive change

We recognise the need for successful partnerships to deliver our strategy and our climate action targets. By collaborating with our partners and having a common purpose, goals and a shared view of what success looks like, we will deliver the most significant change to the energy system since rural electrification.

Enhanced Customer Journey - Industry and customer engagement

In 2022 we continued to focus on enhancing and bringing consistency to our engagement with customers and industry stakeholders. This encompassed implementing learnings from reviews and feedback received to enhance “business as usual”, as well as specific engagements on projects and initiatives to support delivery of our 2020-25 strategy.

In 2022 we continued our work on the initiatives under PR5, to deliver an enhanced customer journey from start to finish, focusing on effective customer and industry engagement. This work has focused on early engagement and ensuring that customers and industry stakeholders can easily find relevant and up to date information on connecting to, as well as the planning, development and operation of, the transmission grid.

## 7.1 Supporting and Connecting our Customers

In 2022, we continued to focus on delivering and enhancing our support to existing and prospective customers, as well as industry stakeholders, in relation to a wide spectrum of electricity industry issues. Our customer account managers are each customer’s primary point of contact within EirGrid. They ensure continued support for their customers and address queries and issues as they arise throughout the year.

Early and consistent engagement with developers during the connection process is something EirGrid recognises as essential and is continuously working to improve. The Customer Team established quarterly and monthly customer clinics with stakeholders to ensure an open dialogue is maintained and the stakeholders are always engaged and informed. Throughout 2022, we hosted 56 customer clinics.

The energy transition can only be delivered if new customers providing the energy, system services, interconnection and investment in Ireland continue to connect to the system. From initial enquiry to energisation, we engage with potential customers to discuss their project(s) with them and guide them through the connection process.

In 2022 we:

- engaged early with potential customers seeking to connect to the transmission system. We provided information and guidance on the transmission system, potential connection methods, connection policy and the connection process to support customers in making informed decisions
- implemented the 2021 direction from the CRU regarding the connection of new data centres and engaged with applicants based on this direction
- provided clear, comprehensible information through publications, customer clinic meetings and one-to-one engagements
- ensured each customer has a clear point of contact at each stage in the connection process and experiences timely feedback and issue resolution
- processed connection applications in line with our regulatory obligations and relevant policies
- regularly engaged with key industry representative bodies to provide updates, gather feedback and prioritise challenges for resolution experienced by each industry sector
- worked closely in collaboration with ESB Networks to deliver our customers’ grid connections in a timely manner.

## 7.2 ESB Networks - Transmission Asset Owner

In 2022, EirGrid and ESB Networks, as Transmission Asset Owner (TAO), continued their collaborative approach to joint project development and delivery.

The companies worked proactively to enhance processes and implement solutions in the deployment of new technology, early project scoping, cost estimating and transmission outage planning areas.

The companies are committed to the delivery of the TSO's ambitious Network Delivery Portfolio (NDP). We recognise the importance of continuous improvement and working together to meet the challenges required to deliver our climate action targets. Further information on the outturn for the TSO/TAO Joint Incentive Performance 2022 will be included in the Annual Electricity Transmission Performance Report 2022.

## 7.3 ESB Networks - Distribution System Operator

ESB Networks, as Distribution System Operator (DSO), operates the electricity distribution system in Ireland. The transition to a power system with up to 80% of its electricity met by renewable energy sources, with a significant portion of the new technologies connecting to the distribution system, requires a heightened level of collaboration with ESB Networks in its role as the DSO. We both have challenging goals to achieve climate action targets and key to achieving these is partnership and collaboration.

In 2022, EirGrid and ESB Networks as DSO worked collaboratively under four key pillars as outlined in our joint multi-year plan for 2022-2026.

Under the Whole-of-System pillar we commenced development of the operating model and regular collaboration sessions were held where we shared information on policy development and future challenges. We also commenced drafting of the aggregation structure paper. Under the Facilitating New Technologies pillar, we commenced discussions with the DSO on potential QTP options. We also issued joint submissions to CRU on Multiple Legal Entities, Sharing of MEC and a recommendation on the Over-Install Policy. There was also significant coordination on winter security of supply measures and pilots such as "Beat The Peak".

The Reducing Dispatch Down pillar saw us collaborate on distributed energy resource forecasting, visibility and control, along with completing the Nodal Controller trial. Finally, under Security of Supply pillar we coordinated the development of a joint Flexible demand Operating Protocol, and coordinated on a survey of protection settings of large customers on both the transmission and distribution systems.

## 7.4 Regulatory Engagement

The CRU is Ireland's independent energy and water regulator and is responsible for the economic regulation of energy, protecting the interests of energy customers, ensuring security of energy supply and facilitating the provision of a low carbon future.

EirGrid's relationship with the CRU is key. EirGrid engaged with the CRU on a regular basis in 2022 regarding issues such as market operations and development, security of supply, transmission system operations, connection policy, tariffing, offshore policy and Celtic interconnector. During 2022, EirGrid also engaged with CRU on matters such as facilitation of interconnection and PR5 implementation.

## 7.5 Academia

EirGrid actively supports research projects and collaborates and partners with academia and research experts, both on the island of Ireland and internationally.

During 2022 EirGrid continued to work with the STEPS partnership at MaREI, the research centre for energy, climate and marine research and innovation at University College Cork. Our partnership with STEPS is scheduled to run until October 2024.

The centre comprises over 220 researchers focusing on defined global challenges such as the Energy Transition, Climate Action and the Blue Economy.

STEPS for Public Engagement with Energy Transitions in an era of Climate Crisis entails an impartial analysis of EirGrid's evolving public engagement processes, based on a mapping of actors, and a framework to codify different elements of existing strategies.

This approach simultaneously offers guidance and suggestions throughout the consultation and engagement process lifecycle, seeking to improve both engagement processes and outcomes.

This includes the completion of comparative case study in Ireland and France drawing insights from the Celtic Interconnector Project and an exploration of the community benefit funding programme, which presents promising opportunities for communities to build and enhance their lead role as

Results to date include the mapping of public roles in energy system change and the synthesis of engagement in electricity grid system change. Researchers are actively engaged with a range of EirGrid Community Forum stakeholders which shall continue and expand. In 2023, the project expects to deliver a discussion paper on EirGrid's multi-step and deliberative engagement processes. It is EirGrid's objective that this collaboration will support additional measuring and evaluation of our approach to engagement.

### 7.5.1 Dublin City University (DCU) Access Programme

EirGrid provided support to the DCU Access Programme during 2022. The three main aims of the programme are:

1. To encourage students they work with to see DCU and third-level education as a potential option.
2. To increase the number and diversity of students from the university's target communities entering third level.
3. To support access to students completing their programme of study.

The access programme achieves these aims through its outreach programme in communities and second level schools in North Dublin. It also has an extensive post-entry supports programme for students who have entered DCU as an Access Student.

Supports include financial, academic, professional, and personal support including one-to-one meetings and an orientation programme.

### 7.5.2 Other academic engagement during 2022

EirGrid also has a long tradition of supporting research in universities by hosting undergraduate students and supporting final year projects and by collaborating with masters and PhD level research. In addition, EirGrid routinely provides letters of support for senior researchers for their funding applications. We also have a long-standing involvement with UCD, primarily with the Energy Institute.

Additionally, over 2022 EirGrid continued to provide information and data upon request to PhD students and researchers.

## 7.6 Other Key Partners

In 2022 we continued to work closely with our partners and explored new partnerships with a range of stakeholders including:

- System operators of interconnected transmission systems and other system operators in Europe and worldwide
- Customers that generate or use large amounts of power and provide system services to support the safe secure and reliable operation of the power system
- National and European policy makers - Government and regulatory policy are key enablers in the energy transition. We provide the data and analysis required to help assist and inform policy development in Ireland and Europe
- Suppliers to enhance our technical capabilities
- Consumer and industry representative bodies
- Not for Profit Organisations, Social Enterprises and Voluntary & Community Sector.

# 8 Appendix 1: Grid Development Projects

In this section, we set out further information on the grid development projects that were identified in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2022<sup>1</sup>. We outlined that we would engage on the following projects:

## North Connacht 110 kV Project

### Overview

The North Connacht 110 kV Project is a new 110kV transmission circuit linking the substations at Moy in Co. Mayo and Tonroe in Co. Roscommon. The government's Climate Action Plan sets out the target to achieve 80% of electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030. The North Connacht 110 kV project is an important step in reaching this target. At present, a large amount of renewable electricity is generated in the North Connacht region and more is planned over the coming years. As the current local electricity network cannot manage the expected flow of power, we need to improve the electricity network in the region.

The new circuit will enhance the network in the area and provide capacity to connect new demands for electricity to support economic growth in the area, and to connect new renewable generation to help with meeting our Climate Action Plan targets.

### Engagement Approach

In June 2022, EirGrid submitted a planning application to An Bord Pleanála under the Strategic Infrastructure Development process including statutory public consultation. The planning application was submitted following extensive technical assessments, consultations, and engagement with local communities, as well as with Mayo and Roscommon County Councils, and other stakeholders.

Subject to planning approval, the project is expected to move into the construction phase in 2023.

### Impact of Engagement

A community forum was established in autumn 2021 and is made up of local community representatives from the area in proximity to the project route. This forum has provided an opportunity for ongoing engagement, capacity building and the preparation of a Community Benefit Strategy.

The project is in Step 5 of the grid development framework, this involved the preparation and submission of consent applications. The preparation of the applications involved engagement with prescribed bodies and other stakeholder as well as communities and landowners. The planning application process provides a formal opportunity for stakeholder and community participation.

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<sup>1</sup> Powering Up Dublin was not included in the 2022 Stakeholder Engagement Plan as it was launched in May 2022.



## Kildare Meath Grid Upgrade

### Overview

The Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade will add a high-capacity electricity connection between Dunstown substation in Kildare and Woodland substation in Meath. The upgrade will help to more effectively transfer power to the east of the country and distribute it within the electricity network in Meath, Kildare and surrounding counties. The project is essential to meet the Government of Ireland's Climate Action Plan targets. This includes transporting electricity from offshore renewable sources. 2022 saw the Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade project progress through a key milestone:

Outcome of the Step 4 EirGrid consultation and routing. The outcome of the public consultation around Step 4 was delivered in March, the consultation explored four potential routes for the underground cable to determine where exactly this project should be built, based on our six-step approach to developing the electricity grid.

### Engagement Approach

Following feedback gathered during an extensive public consultation process and a range of assessments evaluating four possible route options, an emerging best performing route option was selected in March 2022.

On selection of an emerging best performing route option, a series of public engagement days were held throughout March and April in Sallins, Kilcock, Two Mile House, Batterstown, Naas and Prosperous with the project team.

In June, following technical assessments and extensive public consultation, the project team made refinements to the route in order to identify the best performing route option, and to identify where exactly the cable will be located. The best performing route will avoid villages and the town centres of Kilcock, Clane, Prosperous and Sallins and will cross motorways, railways, canals and rivers. The refinements to the route came following further engagement with stakeholders. While the route is longer, these changes will minimise effects to some landowners and communities and reduce the need for road closures.

The Kildare Meath Grid Upgrade Community Forum met four times throughout what was a very busy 2022 with major milestones being reached on the project. In January the members met online to discuss significant feedback received from the public consultation which was held towards the latter end of 2021.

In March the group met online to discuss the Emerging Best Performing Route Option, and this then led to a further online June Meeting when EirGrid published the Best Performing Route.

The last meeting of the year was held in person at Kilcock GAA in October where the group had the opportunity to meet each other face to face for the first time since its establishment. Discussion at this meeting focused on the approach and process towards the community benefit fund.

### Impact of Engagement

Overall, the consultation gave EirGrid detailed feedback about the support, the concerns and the suggestions to be considered across all four routes proposed.

The extensive public consultation and in-depth engagements with stakeholders provided valuable insights into the views and opinions of stakeholders and their support or concerns about the emerging best performing route option.



## Kildare Meath Grid Upgrade

The engagement with the Kildare Meath Grid Upgrade Community Forum throughout 2022 has continued to add valuable insight and local knowledge to the project.

## Celtic Interconnector

### Overview

The Celtic Interconnector is a high voltage direct current (HVDC) interconnector being developed jointly by EirGrid and RTE between the village of Knockraha in County Cork in the South of Ireland, and the commune of La Martyre in Brittany in the North-West of France.

The project was designated by the European Commission as a Project of Common Interest (PCI) under the Regulation for the Trans-European Energy infrastructure (TEN-E). The project is part-Financed by the European Union with a grant of €530 million through the Connecting Europe Facility. The interconnector represents a significant investment in the Irish and French energy systems, with a forecast total cost of the project of approximately €1.6 billion.

The Celtic Interconnector will be the first direct electrical connection between Ireland and mainland Europe and following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union (EU), the Celtic Interconnector will be the only electrical connection from Ireland to another EU member state. The project will benefit both Ireland and France through allowing increased integration of variable renewable energy sources in each country to help achieve their emission reduction targets, increasing energy security, and reducing peak energy prices resulting in mutual benefit for Irish and French consumers and businesses.

### Engagement Approach

Consultation and engagement throughout the project's development was structured, methodical, consistent, resourced and consistently improved and developed in line with evolving project and stakeholder requirements. The purpose was to ensure a robust project development process which could be influenced by stakeholder feedback. An iterative approach to consultation allowed EirGrid to explore options and make well informed decisions and included.

- 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

EirGrid continued to communicate with affected communities in East Cork after the period of statutory consultation closed before receipt of any consenting decision. In EirGrid's experience, many people do not take an active interest in a project until a precise route or project is defined and it was viewed that ongoing communication would be beneficial to stakeholders.

In March, members of the Celtic Interconnector project team made themselves available to answer questions on the project in Midleton and Youghal. These events were well attended. In February the project team met with stakeholders in Knockraha regarding the Knockraha 220 kV substation to give timely notification of the need for a 'Cable Sealing End' should the project get consented.

As per the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) process this modification would require the consent of An Bord Pleanála as a subsequent step in the SID process, however early notification to the community was deemed appropriate and welcomed.

## Celtic Interconnector

In May 2022, as part of the Sustainability Development Goals (SDG) roadshow led by Development Perspectives and sponsored by EirGrid, an SDG workshop was held in Youghal. Hosted by the Youghal Blue and Green Community Network (YBGCN), the workshop was an opportunity to build capabilities within community groups and members of the Celtic Interconnector Forum about how the SDGs impact on their community and how this conversation is linked back to the role of the grid and grid development projects.

Further, in November 2022, as part of EirGrid's national programme of Energy Citizen Roadshows, a roadshow was co-hosted in Youghal with the YBGCN. At the event the group launched their community energy audit completed in cooperation with the local Sustainable Energy Community group. Co-hosting the event facilitated the bringing together of Celtic stakeholder communities to participate in conversations regarding how agencies such as the SEAI, the ESB and EirGrid work together in the energy area and again the role of the grid. EirGrid supported subsequent community workshops in the Youghal community to develop ideas contained in the community audit and progress the community's plans vis a vis energy and community development.

### Impact of Engagement

The approach and impact of engagement on the Celtic Interconnector contributed positively to the consenting applications submitted and subsequently granted for the project by ABP and the DHLGH in 2022.

The approach established a strong network of community relationships, feeding into the successful and ongoing collaborative work carried out by the Project Forum as seen in the participative development of a community benefit fund strategy, a process started in 2022. The engagement also facilitated the collation of a wide database of stakeholders which aids the ability for the project to continue to maintain good engagement and communications. This has an enduring positive impact on the project by facilitating the prompt resolution of public queries and concerns through the use of known and direct communication channels and continuing to foster positive sentiment towards the project.

## Powering Up Dublin

### Overview

The Powering Up Dublin Project will involve installing over 50km of cables across the city. Some cables will replace existing cables, and some will be new. We will also upgrade some electricity substations and build new substations to support Dublin's electricity network. These cables will all be underground.

We have carried out studies to identify new cable routes that will link the following electricity substations to each other:

- North Wall and Poolbeg
- Finglas and North Wall
- Poolbeg and Carrickmines
- Two cables linking Inchicore and Poolbeg

### Engagement Approach

Powering Up Dublin launched in May 2022. At the launch of the project, it was announced that three forums would be included as part of the programme of works: the Dublin Infrastructure Forum, Community Forum and Business Forum.

## Powering Up Dublin

The Dublin Infrastructure Forum (previously mentioned in this report) held its first meeting in May 2022, with a particular focus on this project.

In September 2022 we launched the Powering Up Dublin Business and Community forums. The forums bring together people and organisations from across the project area so that stakeholder, community views and local businesses can be discussed, understood and properly considered throughout the lifecycle of the project.

We hosted two separate information events on 27 September, the first for local businesses and business representative groups and the second for local communities and stakeholders. The aim of these information events was to inform potential members on the role of the forum.

The Powering Up Dublin Business Forum is the first of its kind in EirGrid. It represents the voices of local businesses across the Greater Dublin Area. It creates the opportunity for dialogue between local businesses and the project team to ensure their thoughts, considerations and inputs are taken on board throughout the lifecycle of the project.

The Business Forum:

- Represents the views of local businesses in relation to the project.
- Considers the project and provides guidance on local needs and priorities.
- Assists in enabling the resolution of local issues resulting from the project in a timely manner.
- Provides feedback to the project team.
- Facilitates a 'local voice' and communicate information to a wider group of regional and local stakeholders.

Membership of the forum is comprised of local businesses and business representatives across the Greater Dublin area. The first meeting of the Business Forum took place on 22 November 2022 and 7 members attended.

We asked members of the Business Forum to highlight areas of interest across the Powering Up Dublin study area. These included proposed new developments, impacts to local businesses during construction and phasing and timing of the proposed works. These comments were fed back to the design team to consider when planning the underground cable routes.

The Powering Up Dublin Community Forum brings together people and organisations from across the Greater Dublin area so that stakeholder and community views can be discussed, understood, and properly considered prior to and during project delivery.

The forum creates the opportunity for dialogue between stakeholders with diverse and direct interest in the project and the Powering Up Dublin project team.

The Community Forum:

- Represents the views of communities in relation to the project.
- Considers the project and provides guidance on local needs and priorities.
- Assists in enabling the resolution of local issues resulting from the project in a timely manner.
- Provides feedback to the project team.
- Facilitates a 'local voice' and communicate information to a wider group of regional and local stakeholders.

Membership of the Community Forum is comprised of representatives from local resident and community associations, disability and special interest groups and sporting organisations in the project areas. The first meeting of the Community Forum took place on 22 November 2022.

## Powering Up Dublin

EirGrid also hosted five Energy Citizens Roadshows in Dublin in October 2022. The events provided information on how EirGrid plans to future-proof the electricity grid in Dublin and invited the public to engage with the guest panel, including SEAI and ESB Networks, in discussions around Ireland's energy future, sustainable energy communities, microgeneration and what this will mean for Dublin.

### Impact of Engagement

Community Forum, Business Forum and the Energy Citizens Roadshows allowed for the building of stakeholder networks for the project and assisted with stakeholder mapping. In addition to this, participants in the community forum and business forum provided meaningful design considerations for the project team to consider in developing route options.

A large part of this engagement approach was the general awareness raising of EirGrid among Dublin based stakeholders - given EirGrid has not previously delivered a major grid development project of public interest in this geographical location. A range of school visits and community group meetings has helped establish EirGrid's identity in the locality.

Dublin Infrastructure Forum	Community	Business																
<p>Coordinating technical, planning and engagement aspects of programme delivery across state agencies.</p> <div><div><p>Killeshna na Míreann Committee of Ireland</p></div><div><p>Camphill/Cathair Dhaire Átha Cliath Dublin City Centre</p></div><div><p>dlr Dublin Link Road</p></div><div><p>Fáilte Ireland Dublin City Centre</p></div><div><p>ESB Networks</p></div><div><p>seai Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland</p></div><div><p>TII Transport Infrastructure Ireland</p></div><div><p>Waterways Ireland Dublin City Centre</p></div><div><p>Uisce Éireann Dublin City Centre</p></div><div><p>Uisce Éireann Dublin City Centre</p></div></div>	<p>Made up of community group representatives from across the Powering Up Dublin programme area. Have been involved in constraint mapping pre-consultation.</p> <table><tr><td>Councillors</td><td>Residents Groups</td></tr><tr><td>Community Gardens</td><td>Tidy Towns</td></tr><tr><td>Environmental Groups</td><td>Community Development Groups</td></tr><tr><td>Special Olympics</td><td>Croke Park</td></tr></table>	Councillors	Residents Groups	Community Gardens	Tidy Towns	Environmental Groups	Community Development Groups	Special Olympics	Croke Park	<p>Made up of business representatives from across the Powering Up Dublin programme area. Have been involved in constraint mapping pre-consultation.</p> <table><tr><td>Dublin Chamber</td><td>IBEC</td></tr><tr><td>Councillors</td><td>Restaurant Association</td></tr><tr><td>TU Dublin</td><td>An Post</td></tr><tr><td>RDS</td><td>Aviva</td></tr></table>	Dublin Chamber	IBEC	Councillors	Restaurant Association	TU Dublin	An Post	RDS	Aviva
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RDS	Aviva																	

## East Meath North Dublin Grid Upgrade

### Overview

The East Meath North Dublin Grid Upgrade is a proposed development to reinforce the network between East Meath and North Dublin. Reinforcement of this part of the network is needed to continue to ensure the security of the network feeding the east of Meath and the north of Dublin, between Woodland, Clonee, Corduff, Finglas and Belcamp substations.

The project will help meet the growing demand for electricity in the east of the country due to the increased economic activity in recent years.

It will also facilitate increasing amounts of renewable electricity that is generated by windfarms in the West and South and transported for use in the east of the country.

### Engagement Approach

In September EirGrid launched a 12-week public consultation to seek the public's input in identifying a route for the project. The consultation included information days, open days and webinars, where the EirGrid project team provided information about four proposed route options.

## East Meath North Dublin Grid Upgrade

EirGrid wants to ensure that communities are at the heart of the decision making over the lifetime of the East Meath-North Dublin Grid Upgrade, and we want to listen to relevant input and key local knowledge to assist the project team in this decision making.

To begin the process of forming a Community Forum, we hosted an information evening online on in July. This informed communities and stakeholders about the role of the forum, an overview of its remit and purpose, plus an overview of the proposed community benefit fund.

### Impact of Engagement

The consultation concluded in late 2022 with the feedback from it and the community forum being considered in final route design in 2023.

## Summary of Other Project Engagements during 2022

### Laois Kilkenny Reinforcement Project

EirGrid is reinforcing and strengthening the network in the general Laois-Kilkenny region. We are doing this through the development of a new 400/110 kV substation situated to the south east of Portlaoise, at Coolnaback; a new 110/38 kV substation; a new 110 kV line between these two new stations; an upgrade to the existing Ballyragget - Kilkenny overhead line to a 110 kV standard; and a modification to the existing Athy-Portlaoise 110 kV line and works in Kilkenny station.

The overall Community Benefit Fund for the Laois-Kilkenny Reinforcement Project is €511,500. This fund will be released in three phases, which align with the development of the infrastructure. These funds will provide support to local community groups, not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises that operate or service communities near the new infrastructure. EirGrid has appointed an independent body to administer the fund on its behalf.

The Community Benefit Fund for phase 1 opened for application at the end of November 2021 until February 2022. To assist groups in the application process one to one clinic sessions and a workshop took place during January 2022, these engagements allowed groups to seek advice about the application process and provided assistance on how to write a successful grant application. Nineteen applications were received from community organisations.

EirGrid awarded a total of €204,600 to 13 community groups and not-for-profit organisations near the project location in April 2022 as part of phase 1 of the community benefit fund.

The Laois Kilkenny Community forum met four times throughout the year. Members received project updates at each meeting during the year, the forum began to focus on phase 2 of the community benefit fund in late 2022.

The forum is now focusing on phase 2 of the community benefit fund, with a view to opening this fund in Q3 2023. The phase 2 fund amount is €153,450.

Landowner engagement was undertaken during 2022 with landowners along the Ballyragget - Coolnaback 110kV route re the new overhead line prior to commencement of construction.

A project update was published on the EirGrid website in spring 2022, the brochure provided stakeholders with an update on the project status, community forum, community benefit fund, next steps and how to stay informed.

### North South Interconnector Project

## Summary of Other Project Engagements during 2022

The project is a cross border overhead line between the Ireland and Northern Ireland transmission systems to enhance security of supply, reduce market constraints and facilitate the integration of renewables. The project will consist of 138 km of single circuit 400kV overhead line running from Woodland substation in Co. Meath through counties Cavan, Monaghan, Armagh and joining the Northern Ireland Transmission system at a new substation at Turleenan near Moy in Co. Tyrone.

The North South Interconnector project has full planning permission in Ireland and Northern Ireland. During 2022, EirGrid conducted a number of technical and environmental surveys. This involved engaging with nearly 20% of those landowners who have a tower located on their land.

EirGrid continues to engage with landowners and communities through the use of Agricultural Liaison Officers and a communications team that liaises with political and business stakeholders.

The EirGrid Carrickmacross office remained open on request for stakeholders to drop-in to discuss the project with a community or agriculture liaison officer.

A project website is also available with project updates to members of the public.

EirGrid wants to ensure that communities are at the heart of the decision making over the lifetime of the East Meath-North Dublin Grid Upgrade, and we want to listen to relevant input and key local knowledge to assist the project team in this decision making.

To begin the process of forming a Community Forum, we hosted an information evening online on in July. This informed communities and stakeholders about the role of the forum, an overview of its remit and purpose, plus an overview of the proposed community benefit fund.

### Kilpadogue Knockanure Project

The Kilpadogue-Knockanure Project is a new underground electricity cable that links Kilpadogue and Knockanure substations in North Kerry. The 220 kV cable links Kilpadogue (near Tarbert) and Knockanure substations and was energised in June 2022.

It is a 220 kV high-voltage cable which is capable of transporting large quantities of electricity over long distances. There is already over 200 kilometres of similar underground cable installed on the Irish electricity transmission grid.

In 2020, EirGrid launched the Kilpadogue-Moyvane-Knockanure Community Sponsorship Fund. A total of €205,000 was made available for distribution under the Fund. 15 applicants were successful in sharing the proceeds of the fund and projects are largely complete. In September 2022 EirGrid supported a Community Appreciation Day event to close out the fund. With over 400 in attendance on the day family and community members enjoyed local music and dancing along with a BBQ, ice cream van, outdoor fun and games area for children and case studies of each funded project presented in the main hall.

## 8.1 Project Engagement - Key Learnings from 2022

In the next decade, we will need to develop large amounts of new grid infrastructure - significantly more than in the last ten years. More than ever before, it is important that we gain the support of individual landowners, their neighbours, and their wider communities.

We acknowledge the challenges of what we ask from individuals and communities for the benefit of the entire population. If we do not engage successfully with those affected by grid development plans, we won't achieve climate action targets.

In response, EirGrid has made community engagement and participation part of our core competence. This complements and enables our well-established expertise in engineering. We are developing in-house skills, increasing our capacity and partnering with best practice providers across the industry.

During 2022 progress included an increased focus on planning, reporting and the availability of information regarding all our stakeholder engagement. Learnings from the "Shaping Our Electricity Future" consultation have been significant, as new channels and methods of engagement were deployed for the first time. These fed into our consultation activities to ensure they are appropriately tailored and reflect valuable feedback from consultees.

We are also developing effective systems to deliver and assess our public engagement. This includes evaluation and accreditation from independent international experts.

Our aim is to develop a cohesive approach that reflects and is framed by the energy transition - and by the urgent context of climate action. We will not always be able to deliver the specific technical solution that the public want. But where we cannot, we will ensure they understand why.



# 9 Appendix 2: Community Benefit Case Studies 2022:

## 9.1 Clashavoon Dunmanway Community Benefit Fund

Total Fund amount €600,000

### Case study 1

Community Organisation	Project name	Fund Awarded
Macroom Senior Citizens Housing Development Ltd.	Macroom & Lee Valley Services for the Elderly Electric Van.	€20,000

#### What was the idea:

The purchase of an electric vehicle for meals on wheels delivery to the wider community.

Macroom Senior Citizens are based in Lucey's Lane, Macroom. Co. Cork was founded on 12th June 1968 with a purpose of providing meals on wheels for the Elderly in Macroom Parish. They provide meals to the following areas: Macroom, Clondrohid, Ballinagree, Aghabullogue, Coachford, Carrigadrohid and Kilmichael. Macroom Senior Citizens is a community based voluntary organisation providing services in the following areas, educational programmes, housing and social aspects of life for the Elderly of Macroom and the Lee Valley area. It is their belief that all citizens and in particular the Elderly have the right to live independent, active full lives and they strive to provide services to enhance this quality of life and combat feelings of loneliness and isolation.

#### How the funding has made a difference:

They currently provide 320 meals a week, between the local community centre and local home delivery. They now deliver meals for the elderly to their own homes, using their electric vehicle.

Their meals on wheels service has become very busy and only for the funding received from EirGrid to purchase the electric van they would not be able to sustain the service due to the rise in fuel costs.

#### Quote:

Pat O Connell, Chairperson of the service said that “Our new Electric Van with the EirGrid branding has increased public awareness about our Meals on Wheels Service. We are most grateful for the funding for the van for the delivery of meals to all Senior citizens in the Macroom and Lee Valley area while keeping the environment green and lowering our carbon footprint simultaneously!”

#### Link to YouTube video on this project:

<https://youtu.be/tfIIE5U92FQ>



**Image 1 & 2:** EirGrid branded electric vehicle.



**Image 3:** Sinead Dooley Head of Public Engagement and Pat O Connell Chairman of Macroom Senior Citizens Housing Development Ltd.





**Image 4:** Kay Mc Sweeney, Staff of Macroom Senior Citizens Housing Development Ltd., Avril Wilson Public Engagement team EirGrid, Sinead Dooley Head of Public Engagement EirGrid and Pat O Connell Chairman of Macroom Senior Citizens Housing Development Ltd

## Case study 2:

### Clashavoon Dunmanway Community Benefit Fund

Community Organisation	Project name	Fund Awarded
Carrigadrohid Community Association	Carrigadrohid Community Playground- Funding for development of a new playground through initial design and planning stages.	€33,000.00

#### What was the idea:

This community group sought funding to assist in the development of a community playground including 15 bay carpark and disabled parking. This project site is adjacent to the primary school, church and community centre. The group wanted to create a safe community hub in their area and a place for families to meet socially with an opportunity to stay active. This is a much-needed facility for an expanding community, with a young population. The project is supported by the local County Council, the school Bord of Management and Parish Priest. Parking in the school yard is a safety hazard for the children, this space if vacated could be used by the children as an extra play area at school break times. This new carpark will also be used by those accessing the playground, the community centre and the church. This playground has been designed as fun active space that will welcome all ages, including those with limited ability.

#### How the funding will make a difference:

This project is a phased joint venture, which will unlock multi agency funding. The €33,000 from the EirGrid community fund will leverage as seed funding for the purchase of the land for their project. The funding will unlock other funding streams to further develop this project. The overall total project will be in the region of €200,000 and the group are in the process of submitting a LEADER application to Avondhu/Blackwater LEADER partnership and have been working with Cork County Council who have endorsed this project. Once the construction is completed, Cork County Council will maintain and operate the playground and carpark including insurance, maintenance and upkeep in co-operation with the local community.

**Quote:**

Grainne Dunlea, Committee member of Carrigadrohid Community Association said, “this funding will make a huge difference to the community, we currently don’t have a safe area for children to play in outside the traditional GAA playing fields. The playground will provide a safe environment near the school and in turn the school can benefit. The community benefit fund is an essential cog in the wheel to getting this project off the ground”



**Image 1:** Grainne Dunlea, Carrigadrohid Community Association, Sinead Dooley Head of Public Engagement EirGrid, Michael Murphy, Circle of Friends Committee member, Barry Condon, School Principal.





**Image 2:** Grainne Dunlea, Carrigadrohid Community Association, Sinead Dooley, Head of Public Engagement EirGrid, Michael Murphy, Circle of Friends Committee member, Barry Condron, School Principal.

## 9.2 Laois Kilkenny Reinforcement Project

Total Fund amount: €204,600

### Case study 3

Community Organisation	Project name	Fund Awarded
Ballinakill Community Development Association CLG	Ballinakill Amenity Park Development Project	€40,500

#### What was the idea:

The project consists of the following aspects:

- Fencing the playground area
- 20kw Solar Panels for outdoor swimming pool
- Shaded Amenity Area adjacent to the playground
- Groundworks and fencing of the pool side area (within 12-18 months)

#### How the funding will make a difference:

Completion of this project will serve as an example of how local community groups can use renewable energy. The swimming provides a valuable recreational facility to the surrounding community. Their utility bills and running costs will be reduced due to the solar panel's installation, this will free up funding for other elements of their community development plan.

The groundworks and fencing will improve the visual appearance but more importantly make the site safe for all and reduce insurance costs.

The Shaded Amenity Area will provide an open learning and recreational space for people all ages and abilities for example for summer camps or workshops.

The groups have said that they “take great pride in using an 'Air to Water' heating system for the pool and the solar panels will be a huge addition. As a committee they want to establish themselves as a group which promotes sustainability”.

Completion of the 'Green areas' of the site will provide a picnic area, free play area and an area in which they can host outdoor workshops in collaboration with Laois County Council, library service and heritage group.

#### The project has aligned to the following Sustainable Development Goals:

##### Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

The project will promote and provide facilities for outdoor activities for people of all ages, backgrounds & abilities.

##### Goal 5: Gender Equality

Gender is no barrier to the access of the facility and the community group are an Equal Opportunities employer.

##### Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

The group will act as an advertisement to visitors and users for solar energy as well as adopting clean energy for their own use.

**Goal 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth**

They employ both lifeguard and office staff during the pool season and are conscious that the Amenity Park will bring footfall and business to the village.

**Goal 13: Climate Action**

They have used recycled materials and goods where possible and promote a 'Bring your Rubbish Home' policy.



**Image 1:** Aerial view of outdoor swimming pool and car park.





**Image 2:** New Play area.