

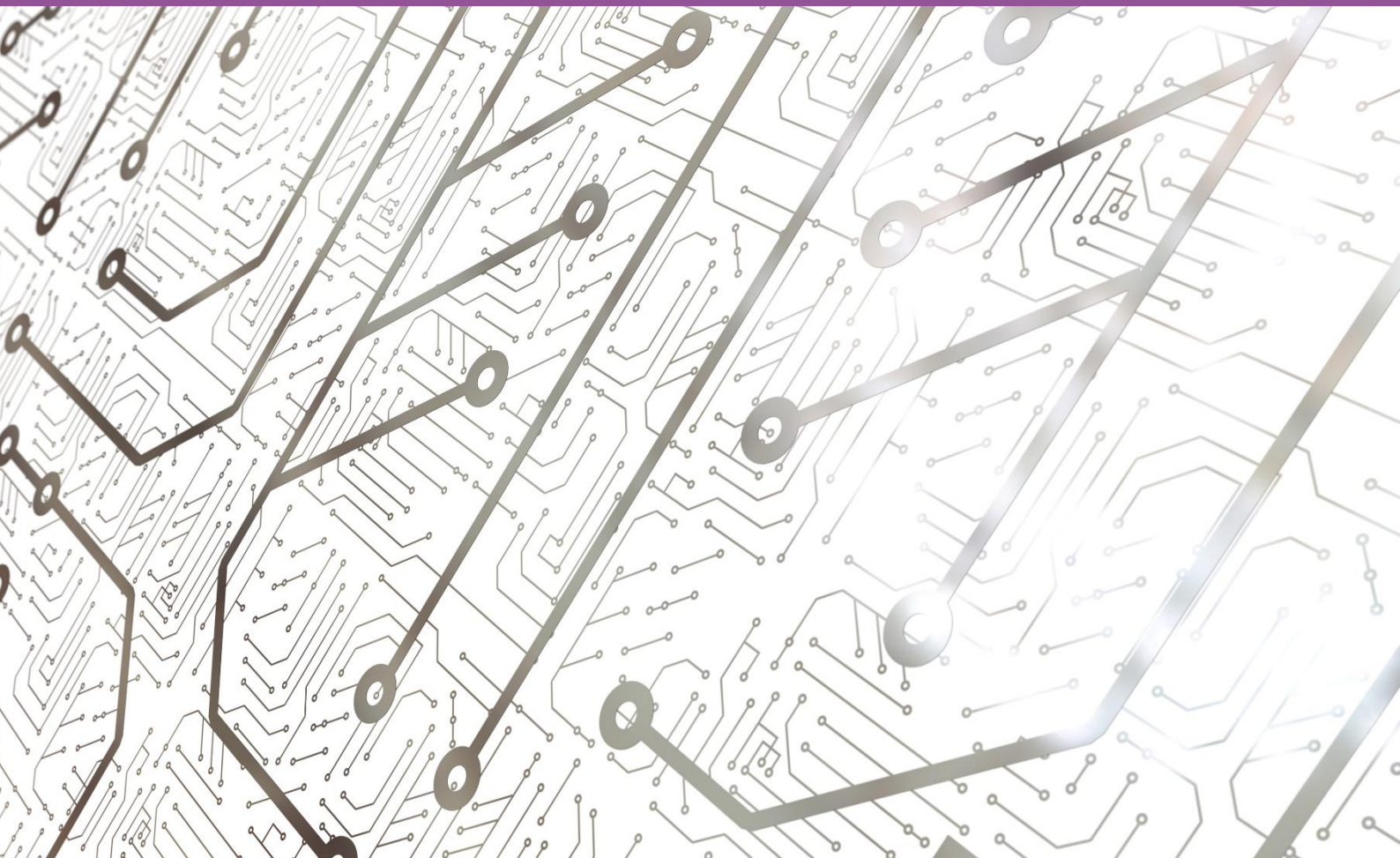


CP966 Kildare – Meath Grid Upgrade, Step 4

Engagement Summary Report

EirGrid

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About this report

This report provides a summary of engagement carried out in the period that followed the public consultation for step 4 of the Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade project. In this period, EirGrid engaged with a range of stakeholders on their Emerging Best Performing Option (EBPO). Traverse, an independent consultancy specialising in engagement and consultation analysis, was commissioned to report on the findings.

Background

EirGrid is the state-owned operator of Ireland's electricity transmission grid. It is responsible for a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity in Ireland. Since 2006, EirGrid has operated and developed the national high voltage electricity grid and wholesale market in Ireland. The grid moves wholesale power around the country by bringing energy from generation stations to heavy industry and high-tech users. The grid also supplies the distribution network operated by ESB Networks that powers every electricity customer in the country.

The Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade project is intended to add a high-capacity underground electricity connection between the Dunstown substation near Two Mile House in Kildare and the Woodland substation near Batterstown in Meath.

The project is considered essential to meet the Government of Ireland's Climate Action Plan target up of 80% renewable energy generation by 2030, this includes transporting electricity from offshore renewable sources. It will also help meet the growing demand for electricity in the East. This growth is due to increased population and economic activity in the region.

A significant number of Ireland's electricity generators are in the South and South West, where many wind farms and some modern electricity generators are located. The power they generate needs to be transported to where it is needed. The power is mainly transported cross-country on the two existing 400 kV lines from the Moneypoint station in Clare to the Dunstown substation near Two Mile House in Kildare and Woodland substation near Batterstown in Meath. The proposed Kildare-Meath project will connect these two lines, and this will strengthen the transmission network by improving reliability and security in the region.

For more information about the project, including the consultation brochure, visit the EirGrid website: www.eirgrid.ie/KildareMeath

EirGrid's approach to engagement

EirGrid follows a six-step approach to developing the grid. This is set out in full in EirGrid's *Have your say* document: <http://www.eirgridgroup.com/newsroom/have-your-say-energy/>

- 1) Identifying the future needs of the electricity grid;
- 2) What technologies can be used to meet these needs;
- 3) The best option and the areas affected;
- 4) The location of the grid;

- 5) The planning process; and
- 6) Construction, energisation, and benefit sharing.

Step 3 of the grid development process for the Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade led to the Best Performing Technology Option being announced as Option 4 - an underground cable. The project is currently at Step 4, which determines where exactly the cable should be built.

Step 4 of the Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade

Consultation Phase

EirGrid identified four potential route options for the underground cables and these were assessed using a multi criteria assessment under the following five categories:

- Technical
- Economic,
- Environmental,
- Socio-Economic: and
- Deliverability.

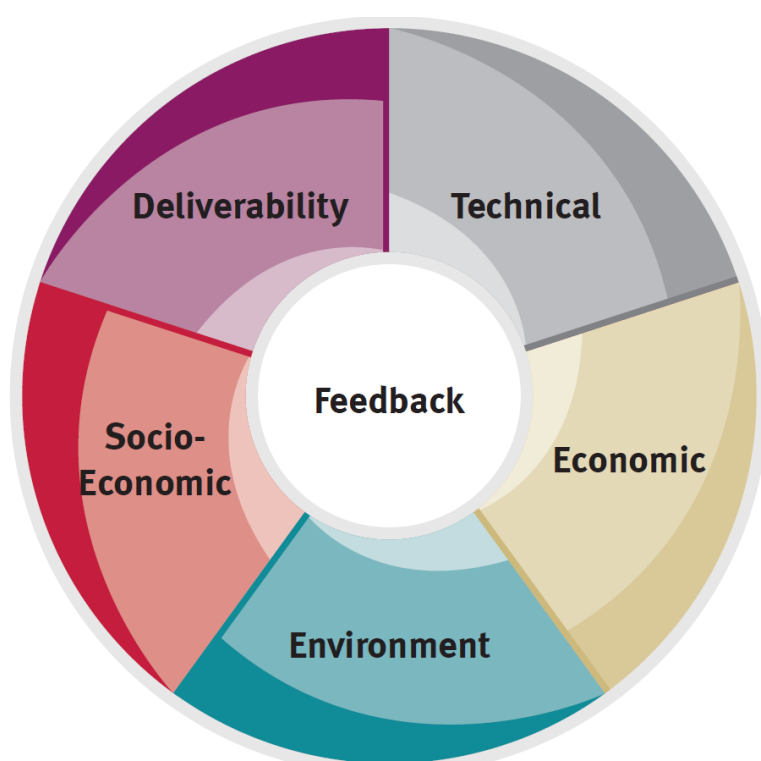


Figure 1: EirGrid's assessment categories

Consultation

The Step 4 consultation was held from 31 August to 22 November 2021. It sought views on the four options, as well as respondents' views on the project more broadly, and information on any major events and festivals in the area that EirGrid should consider when planning the project.



The consultation received 107 responses in total, and EirGrid used the feedback gathered to inform the EBPO.

The EBPO was published in the *Step 4A Report - Analysis of the Route Options* in March 2022.

The report can be viewed here: <http://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/KMGU-JAC-TN-0017-Step-4A-Report-08-03-2022-Compressed.pdf>

The EBPO was identified as Option A (the Red Route). This route is the most westerly of the four cable route options, and travels south from Woodland substation near Batterstown in Meath to Dunstown substation near Two Mile House in Kildare. It involves both on-road and off-road sections.

Figure 2: The Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade Emerging Best Performing Option (The Red Route)

Post-Consultation Engagement

This report provides a summary of feedback received during engagement with stakeholders on the EBPO between 8 March and 7 April 2022.

EirGrid engaged with a number of stakeholders through in-person information days and door-to-door. EirGrid held six public information days in the following locations:

- The Grange, Sallins, Co. Kildare;
- Kilcock GAA Club, Co. Kildare;
- Two Mile House GAA Club, Co. Kildare;
- Blackhall Gaels GAA Club, Co. Meath;

- Naas Sports Centre, Co. Kildare; and
- Prosperous Parish Centre, Co. Kildare.

Members of EirGrid's project team were on site at each of the events to answer questions from stakeholders.

In that period, their team also carried out door-to-door engagement with a number of stakeholders. Stakeholders voiced their opinions on the EBPO, as well as on environmental issues, conservation areas, and the Community Benefit Fund.

The views and personal opinions outlined in this report are those of the people who fed back to EirGrid and are reported on as they were expressed.

General feedback from stakeholders

Some stakeholders provided positive feedback about the project, including:

- The proposed Community Benefit Scheme;
- The use of an underground cable;
- That the cable would run on roads close to residential property, as its construction could potentially mean the upgrade of local roads; and
- Satisfaction at the level of engagement and publicity during the consultation process, including advertisements in regional newspapers.

Some stakeholders raised general concerns over potential adverse impacts arising from the project, including the potential for increased disruption for local communities and businesses. There was particular concern about potential disruption during construction, including the number of construction traffic movements.

Other issues that were raised included:

- impacts on local amenities such as sports pitches;
- The importance of communication with those who would be impacted, as identified on the maps provided, and ensuring sufficient detail was contained within the maps;
- Potential safety issues arising from Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)
- Concerns over the project timeline.

Suggestions from stakeholders:

Feedback included some suggestions for EirGrid to keep stakeholders updated regarding the development of the project and Community Benefit Fund. Some suggested that part of the community benefit be spent on the Scouts, Wheelers, and local sports pitches, and that the roads used should be widened and improved.

A few others requested further information regarding the project, including its timeline, the number of crews required for construction, and the type of cable that would be used.

One suggestion was that EirGrid reinstate areas that they develop to the same condition they were in prior to the project.

Comments about the Emerging Best Performing Option (EBPO)

Some stakeholders expressed general support for the project, including the timeline and the options provided.

A few voiced concerns regarding land use, specifically that the cable route would go through private land, could damage crops, and that land used may not be returned to its original condition, with some fearing potential sterilisation arising from easement.

One concern was raised that safety could be undermined due to overhanging trees on the 'Red Road' and that re-aligning the road could have potential adverse impacts to Gibbeth Rath.

Suggestions about the EBPO

A small number of stakeholders made suggestions regarding the EBPO. A few suggested that further information should be provided, including details of consultation with EirGrid's ecologist on planting, what the width of easement would be, and the potential impact to the 'North-South' Interconnector.

Other suggestions included:

- Compensation to be supplied for sterilisation from easement, per linear metre across farm land, and for crop loss and damages;
- Cycling routes to be considered during construction;
- The Red Road be re-instated following completion of the project; and
- The R125 should be closed because it is too narrow.

Comments about the route

A few stakeholders expressed general support for the route, with an additional few specifying support on the grounds that the route does not pass through the town or private land.

A few stakeholders expressed concern over the potential for disruption due to the cable being installed through the public road network, including roundabouts, and the potential for road closures during construction. A few others raised concerns that the route may run through their land and farms or be in close proximity to their residence.

Suggestions about the route

A few stakeholders made suggestions for the route, including that:

- The mature hedge on the raised berm along the old red route should be protected through the installation of parking bays;
- The road between Mullagh and Kilcock should be closed and re-instated in better condition, meaning that the final route would have to be adjusted; and
- More detailed maps should be provided so that residents can identify the proximity of the route in relation to their properties.

Suggestions and other comments:

A few stakeholders made other comments about the project, including:

- That there should be arrangements to facilitate dairy farming, including milk and silage production;
- That if the road is to be dug up, other utilities should also be placed underground;
- General comments about biodiversity and renewable energy; and
- General queries about Moneypoint.

Community Forum and Community Benefit

In July 2021, the first meeting of the Community Forum took place, and this body continues to act as an important consultative body to influence the project's development. Its eighth meeting was held prior to the announcement of the EBPO, with its members invited to comment on the route.

The Community Forum is established by EirGrid to support consultation, communication, engagement, relationship building and benefit sharing on grid development projects.

The community forum has the following functions:

- To provide relevant input and key local knowledge to assist the project team in decision making;
- Work with community groups and organisations to build trust, identify local needs, grow partnerships and deliver on local projects;
- Provide governance and transparency around the implementation of the Community Benefit Fund, including oversight of the Community Fund Administrator;
- Receive regular updates from EirGrid team members on project delivery, including engagement with the organisations and communities the members represent;
- Advise EirGrid on the most effective approach to communicating feedback and key milestones to the wider community.

Community Forum members for the Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade project were advised of the chosen route and opportunities for further engagement. EirGrid also promoted the EBPO for four weeks across a range of media including local and regional press titles including the Meath Chronicle, Leinster Leader, Kildare Nationalist, and Liffey Champion, and on radio with Kildare FM, along with social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. EirGrid corresponded with stakeholders throughout, via emails and telephone calls, and published information on the EirGrid website in relation to the EBPO.

Next Steps

This report is being published alongside the *Step 4B Report – Route Options and Evaluation Report*, which confirms the best performing route option in detail. This option will be taken into Step 5 (the planning process) following engagement with landowners, community forum, infrastructure owners and other key stakeholders in addition to environmental surveys and assessments.

Further engagement will be required in Steps 5 and 6 in line with EirGrid's six-step approach. Should planning permission be granted, the Community Forum will also oversee the implementation of a Community Benefit Scheme with the support of the EirGrid Public Engagement team and the Community Fund Administrator.

The Community Forum will co-develop a community benefit strategy in conjunction with local stakeholders and will work with EirGrid to ensure the fund administrator aligns the benefit scheme to the strategy. The strategy will need to align with other local community plans, national policy and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The community benefit is spread across three funding streams including:

- Community - to reinforce community cohesion, wellbeing and education,
- Sustainability - to transform how communities think about, generate and use energy; and
- Biodiversity - to leave the biodiversity of an area in a better condition than it was before we built a project.

More information on the consultation can be found here:

www.eirgrid.ie/KildareMeath



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