

East Meath-North Dublin Grid Upgrade

Engagement Summary Report

STEP 4 Emerging Best Performing Option

July 2023

Prepared by M-CO





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VERSION CONTROL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between September and November 2022, a 12-week consultation period took place as part of Step 4 (*Where exactly should we build?*) of EirGrids public engagement on the East Meath–North Dublin Grid Upgrade. The consultation focused on four route options and sought local knowledge and feedback relating to how these options might affect local communities and other key stakeholders.

Informed by the outputs of this consultation, the route referred to as the “Red Route” was identified as the preferred option i.e. the Emerging Best Performing Option (EBPO). EirGrid then engaged with a range of stakeholders on the EBPO during the period from 29th March 2023 to 14th May 2023. This report provides a summary of engagement carried out and any further feedback received during this EBPO period. This report will be taken into consideration as input to decision making to determine the Best Performing Option (BPO)

This report has been prepared by M-CO, working as EirGrid’s consultation and engagement partner.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Who are EirGrid and what do they do?

EirGrid develops, manages, and operates Ireland’s electricity grid. On behalf of Ireland’s energy users, big and small, it is responsible for the safe, secure and reliable supply of Ireland’s electricity. EirGrid is also leading the secure transition to a sustainable low-carbon future.

How does the grid operate

EirGrid

Power generation companies create electricity and compete to supply it at the best price.

EirGrid makes sure there is enough electricity, then safely delivers this directly to large energy users and all around the grid.

ESB Networks take electricity from the grid and send to everyone who needs it.

Consumers choose an electricity supplier, confident that they’ll have a reliable and secure supply – now and in future.

The grid brings power from where it is generated to where it is needed throughout Ireland. It supplies power directly to industry and businesses that use large amounts of electricity. The grid also brings power from generators to the domestic network that supplies the electricity you use every day in homes, businesses, schools and hospitals.

The grid is a critical infrastructure that supports the development of our society and economy. Work carried out now to improve the grid will help to create a more sustainable future for the next generation.

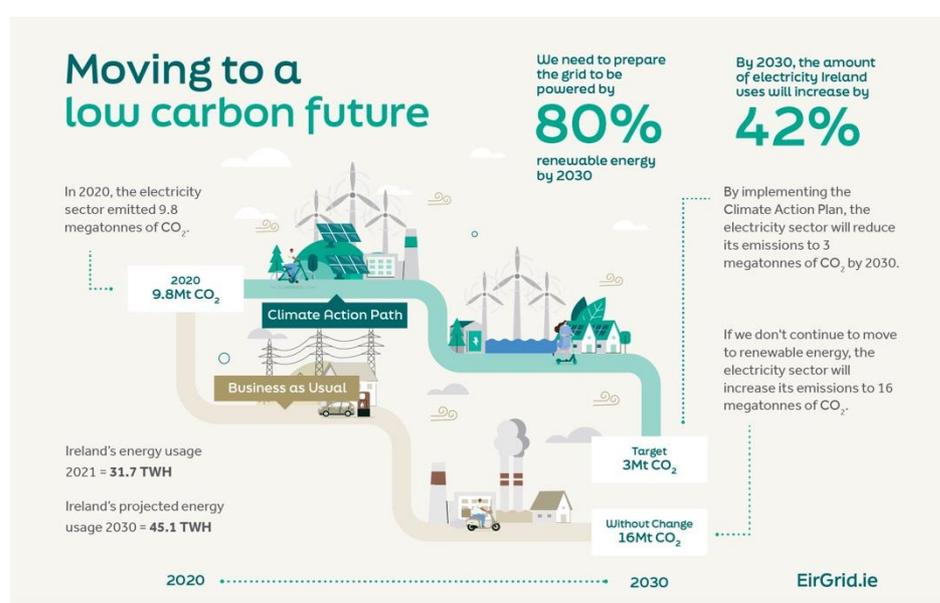
1.2. What is The East Meath–North Dublin Upgrade Project and why is it needed?

The East Meath–North Dublin Grid Upgrade is the proposed development to reinforce the grid network between east Meath and north Dublin. This proposed upgrade will help to meet the growing demand for electricity in the east of the country, that is due to the increased economic activity and population growth in recent years.

Meath and Dublin are ideally placed for optimal transport networks including air, road and rail, providing access to and from Dublin and the rest of Ireland. Over the past 25 years, the population in Meath has increased by 81.5% and doubled in north Dublin. Rapid population growth and proximity to Dublin City have led to thousands of businesses, including multi-national companies and Irish SMEs, being situated within the region, including important sectors such as construction, pharmaceuticals, information technology, energy and more. The growth in the area is set to continue and, with this, the energy demand.

The East Meath–North Dublin Grid Upgrade will prepare the grid for the delivery of more renewable electricity from sources such as wind, solar and hydro. This is in line with Government policy. Renewable energy accounted for 36% of all electricity consumed in Ireland in 2019. Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2023 calls for 80% of the country's electricity to come from renewable energy sources by 2030.

Upgrading and strengthening Ireland's electricity grid allows the system to send more energy, both traditional and renewable sources, from where it is generated to where it is needed. The grid needs to deliver a constant supply of energy to users while simultaneously managing a variable supply of energy generated from wind, solar and hydro sources. Grid upgrades will help Ireland to meet growing and changing energy demands while also facilitating a transition to renewable, sustainable electricity generation.



2. EIRGRID'S APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

EirGrid follows a six-step approach to develop Ireland's electricity grid. What to expect, and the ways in which the public can influence projects at each step, is set out in full in EirGrid's [Have Your Say](#) document. This information is also available on EirGrid's website: www.eirgridgroup.com.

During the 6 steps of each project, EirGrid engages with stakeholders in a variety of ways. This allows EirGrid to inform and to listen, to exchange ideas and plans, to integrate stakeholder interests into project developments and rollouts, and to agree on solutions that suit as many people as possible.



● **Current Step**

For the East Meath–North Dublin Grid Upgrade, the four steps to date have been:

- In **Step 1**, in 2017, EirGrid confirmed the need for the East Meath-North Dublin Grid Upgrade (all assessment documents are available [here](#)).
- In **Step 2**, an initial list of 21 possible project solutions were identified. EirGrid compared all the options using technical and economical standards and then evaluated the options using the EirGrid Multi Criteria Assessment (assessment documents are available [here](#)). Four technical options emerged which were taken to Step 3 for in-depth feasibility assessments.
- In **Step 3**, the in-depth feasibility assessment found that three of four technical options involved significant challenges and would not be progressed further. The Woodland – Belcamp 400kV underground cable circuit was chosen as the Best Performing Technical Option for this project. An 8-week stakeholder awareness campaign informed the public of this grid upgrade and the upcoming public consultation on the possible route options.
- In **Step 4**, four possible route options were shortlisted for the Woodland-Belcamp cable circuit. A 12-week public consultation and engagement campaign was launched across the study area, to allow EirGrid to better understand how the upgrade will affect local communities and other key stakeholders. Local knowledge and insights helped EirGrid design the project to minimise negative impacts. A report was delivered on this phase of consultation and engagement which can be [viewed on the EirGrid website](#). At the end of this step, a best performing option (BPO), developed through collaboration and shared understanding in affected areas, will be presented. This report will be taken into consideration as an input to the BPO.

3. STEP 4 EMERGING BEST PERFORMING OPTION (EBPO) ENGAGEMENT

The focus of this report is to outline the 6-week post consultation engagement and to present any emerging feedback on the Emerging Best Performing Option (EBPO) i.e. the red route.

3.1 Consultation

Step 4 commenced with a 12-week consultation period, from the 7 September 2022 to 30 November 2022. A PR and advertising campaign was delivered during this time comprising:

- 504 radio spots on local radio
- 21 newspaper ads
- 6 Press Releases issued to regional media
- A social media campaign across Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

During the consultation period, EirGrid also convened three focus groups and carried out stakeholder meetings, public information days and webinars. There was also a strong door-to-door consultation in the area, with 150 homes visited by Community Liaison officers.

The consultation period sought views on the shortlisted four route options, as well as respondents' views and insights on project information more broadly. EirGrid requested feedback on major events and festivals in the affected area that should be considered in scheduling the project.

Consultation responses were received through email, free-post and the EirGrid consultation portal. The consultation received 24 responses in total. Full details of the outcomes of this consultation [are available on the EirGrid website](#). Responses from the consultation have, together with the mix of technical data and development plans, helped inform the EBPO.

The Red Option, as seen on the map below, has been identified as the EBPO. It is the shortest of the four shortlisted route options. It is approximately 37km in length, with an estimated off-road section of 9km. The majority of the route follows existing roads. It travels south from Woodland substation, near Batterstown in County Meath, to Belcamp substation near Clonshaugh, in north Dublin.



3.2 EBPO Engagement and Stakeholder Feedback

The post-consultation phase lasted 6 weeks, from 29 March 2023 to 14 May 2023. During this phase EirGrid stakeholders were informed about the Emerging Best Performing Option. Stakeholder engagement during this phase helped EirGrid to develop the route option further and to endeavour to minimise disruption to local stakeholders where possible. EirGrid corresponded with stakeholders throughout the EBPO phase via email, phone calls, a webinar and the EirGrid website. Additionally, EirGrid built community awareness of the project through the following:

3.2.1 Awareness-Raising PR

To inform the communities that will be affected by the East Meath–Dublin Grid Upgrade, EirGrid shared project updates across a range of media including local and regional press and radio channels, including the Dublin Gazette, Dublin People, The Herald and The Meath Chronicle, 98FM, 104FM and LMFm, as well as across social media channels including Facebook and Twitter. An example of EirGrid's media campaign assets can be found in Appendix 1.

The radio campaign has proven effective for this phase and reached over 40 per cent of the EirGrid target audience within the project area at least once. Social media information videos were the social media content with the most reach for the period.

3.2.2 Open Day and Mobile Information Unit Events

In total, four Open Day events were held following the announcement of the EBPO. This included two in Dublin (in the Clayton Hotel Dublin Airport and in St Margarets GAA Club) and two in Meath (in Scoil Bhríde, Kilbride and The Hatchet Inn, Summerhill Road). For each of the Open Days, EirGrid's Community Liaison Officers (CLO), project managers and members of the EirGrid technical team were on site to answer questions and document feedback received. Approximately 50 people attended the Open Days during this phase in total.

In addition to Open Days, EirGrid organised four Mobile Information Unit (MIU) events, in Dunboyne AFC, Caffrey's Batterstown, The Coachman's Inn (Dublin Airport) and Sweeneys of Kilbride. The EirGrid MIU events are staffed by EirGrid's CLOs and two members of the project team and provided additional opportunities for the public to get project information and provide feedback to the EirGrid team.

3.2.3 Stakeholder Meetings

EirGrid had stakeholder meetings with representatives from Municipal Districts, County Councils, and Local Areas Committees to inform them about the EBPO and to invite feedback on the proposed development plans.

A learning from previous consultations has been that schools, libraries and post offices are effective distribution channels for project information, to boost community awareness of EirGrid's grid upgrade plans. EirGrid therefore placed project brochures in 5 libraries and post offices and engaged with 3 schools as part of Engineers Week in March. This included Scoil Bhríde NS Kilbride Co. Meath, St Margarets NS in St Margarets, Co. Dublin and Rathregan NS, Batterstown Co. Meath.

3.2.4 Community Forums

Community Forums are one of the key mechanisms that EirGrid uses to harness local knowledge during the planning stages of grid upgrades. Community Forums act as an important consultative body to input to project planning and proposed project execution. They also support project communications, relationship building and benefit sharing on grid development projects.

The East Meath-North Dublin Community Forum was established in August 2022. During the EBPO engagement phase, the Community Forum met twice to get updates on the project and to discuss feedback from their respective organisations. Meeting minutes can be found [here](#).

East Meath–North Dublin Community Forum Members	
Fingal Chamber	Fingal County Council
Meath County Council	St Margarets GAA
Meath Chamber	St. Margarets Parish Hall Committee
Tyrrelstown Residents Community Council	St. Margarets The Ward
St Margarets Action Group	Craobh Ciarans GAA
Dunboyne AFC	Dunboyne Community Centre
Blackhall GAA Club	Kilbride Tidy Towns
Scoil Bhríde Kilbride Parents Association	Grange Neighbours Group
Batterstown Village Enhancement Assoc.	St. Peter's G.A.A. Club Dunboyne
County Meath Chamber	

4. FEEDBACK ON THE EBPO

Feedback from the public and other stakeholders was captured at Open Days, Mobile Information Unit events, door-to-door engagements and stakeholder meetings by the CLOs.

Most stakeholders expressed that they were happy with the information and the mapping provided across engagement phases. The majority of stakeholders who engaged, clearly understood and accepted the need for the East Meath–North Dublin Grid Upgrade.

No new queries or areas of concern emerged during this period of engagement that had not previously been addressed during the initial Step 4 Consultation and Engagement phase. These themes are summarised under the following themes:

- Traffic management, road closures and traffic disruptions
- Construction / environmental and health concerns,
- Other utilities and coordination of project roll out,
- EirGrid engagement process and communications / information.

A few stakeholders had specific queries regarding construction disruption near their homes. All stakeholders who raised queries were followed up directly by the CLOs and members of the technical team who discussed their query in detail and noted this down for inclusion in the Step 4B technical report.

Recurring themes raised	
Traffic Management, Road Closures and Traffic Disruptions	<p>Q: Will I be able to access my driveway – enter/exit my property without disruption?</p> <p>A: Yes, you will be able to access your driveway at all times during construction. All local residents and businesses will be contacted in advance of construction to provide details of the construction management plan and relevant points of contact throughout.</p>
	<p>Q: What diversions will be put in place – will proper signage be used to aid traffic movement?</p> <p>A: This will be part of the traffic management plan that will be provided and agreed with the Local Authority before commencing construction.</p>
	<p>Q: How do you cater for farm traffic?</p> <p>A: EirGrid will listen to local farmer/landowner concerns and include these in the construction plan. EirGrid will also endeavour to ensure construction does not commence during peak farm activities.</p>
	<p>Q. Will you accommodate school times by not having works ongoing during school run times?</p> <p>A: This will be done where possible, construction will factor in all these school run times, as well as sports and community events when working on the traffic management plan. While there will be disruption, it will be minimised as much as possible.</p>
Construction and Environmental and Health Concerns	<p>Q. How long will the overall construction of the East Meath – North Dublin take?</p> <p>A. Construction will be over a 3- year period, carried out in phases and will cover up to 100m per day in a certain area. No area will be disrupted continually over the 3 years.</p>
	<p>Q. What distance is covered (trenching / ducting) in any given day?</p> <p>A. Up to 100m per day.</p>
	<p>Q. When will construction begin and when will it finish?</p> <p>A. This is yet to be determined and depends on approval of the final planning application. Construction will begin in summer 2026 at the earliest</p>
	<p>Q. What levels of EMF are emitted from the cable? What effects will it have on me and my family?</p>

	<p>A. As this is a recurring question EirGrid have produced an EMF brochure – “The electricity grid and your health which is available on our website here.</p> <p>The maximum magnetic field strength from all high-voltage transmission infrastructure items measured falls well below the ICNIRP guideline reference level for the protection of public health. Full scientific reviews and studies are also available on the EirGrid website</p>
	<p>Q. How will the cables impact growth above / near the cable.</p> <p>A. This information will be available in the Environmental report.</p>
<p>Other utilities and coordination of project roll out</p>	<p>Q. What joined up thinking between existing utilities and those planned is being considered?</p> <p>A. In order to determine the final route, EirGrid works closely with all utilities to endeavour to minimise impact to communities</p>
<p>Feedback on the EirGrid process and communications/ information</p>	<p>Q. What happens between now and BPO announcement?</p> <p>A. EirGrid’s technical teams will continue to assess and refine the route with technical surveys and analysis ongoing until the planning application is submitted. EirGrid ALO’s will continue to engage with landowners for consent on the off-road sections, while the project team will continue to engage with technical stakeholders.</p>

5. NEXT STEPS – BEST PERFORMING OPTION

It is expected that the Best Performing Option (BPO) will be announced in September 2023. This will be announced via a media campaign in local press, radio and targeted social media channels, along with community forum meeting, and in-person stakeholder meetings.

Following additional engagement with all associated stakeholders the BPO will be taken into Step 5 when a planning application will be developed and submitted to An Bord Pleanála in Q4 2023.

Stakeholder and public engagement will continue throughout Step 5 and Step 6 in line with EirGrid’s six-step approach. Should planning permission be granted, a dedicated community benefit fund will be made available to provide direct benefits to communities who are closest to the cable. The first step is the appointment of an independent community benefit fund administrator who will work with the East Meath–North Dublin Community Forum and EirGrid to co-develop a community benefit strategy. The fund, which is proportional to the scale of the project, supports local good causes and helps communities transform their area. EirGrid’s community benefit policy is available [here](#).

More information on the East Meath-North Dublin Grid Upgrade can be found here:

www.eirgrid.ie/eastmeathnorthdublin

Appendix 1

EirGrid East Meath-North Dublin EBPO Press Ad



East Meath-North Dublin Grid Upgrade See the Emerging Best Performing Route Option

Thank you for taking part in EirGrid's recent public consultation. Having completed further studies and listened to your feedback, we now have an Emerging Best Performing Route Option for the new 400kV underground electricity cable, connecting Woodland substation in Co. Meath to Belcamp substation in North Dublin. This will help us to deliver a secure electricity supply and bring more renewable energy onto the electricity grid.

We'll keep you up to date as we work to finalise the route. Find out more at EirGrid.ie/eastmeathnorthdublin or scan the QR code above.



