

EirGrid Seeks Judicial Review of Variation to Monaghan County Development Plan

02 March 2009 - EirGrid is seeking a judicial review of Monaghan County Council's decision to severely restrict the placing of transmission lines in the county.

In January 2009, members of the Council passed a variation to the County Development Plan that stated that no power lines in excess of 220kV be located within 100 metres of any dwelling house, school, sports field, playground or place of work.

EirGrid is involved in the development of vital infrastructure projects which are essential for the provision of secure, high-quality electricity supplies nationally; for the connection of increased renewable energy; to assist competition; and to facilitate balanced regional development. In the North East, EirGrid is planning a major investment in electricity infrastructure in Monaghan, Meath and Cavan.

EirGrid issued proceedings last Friday 27th February challenging the variation to the County Development Plan on a number of grounds in the High Court.

EirGrid believes the variation would severely impact plans to develop the new electricity infrastructure in County Monaghan and within the Border region and will limit its ability to develop energy infrastructure on an all-island basis.

EirGrid has a responsibility to deliver vital transmission infrastructure in accordance with the policies and objectives set by Government. This infrastructure will deliver tangible benefits to all electricity customers on the island of Ireland and is vital in ensuring that EirGrid meets the Government's 40% target for renewable energy by 2020.

EirGrid plans its infrastructural developments taking into account a large number of constraints including impact on communities, visual impact, cultural heritage, impacts on flora and fauna, and seeks to minimise the impacts having due regard to the totality of the constraints.

EirGrid believes it is necessary to present the relevant issues to the High Court for adjudication in order to protect the interests of the electricity consumer.

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Background

EirGrid is the independent electricity transmission system operator in Ireland and the operator of the electricity wholesale trading market.

Its role is to deliver quality connection, transmission and market service to generators, suppliers and customers using the high voltage electricity system and to put in place the grid infrastructure required to support the development of Ireland's economy.

EirGrid is planning two projects to facilitate cross border sharing of electricity, to promote better competition and to ensure a future secure supply of electricity throughout the north east of Ireland:

- (a) an 80 km, 400 kV connection between Cavan and Tyrone; and
- (b) a 58 km, 400 kV connection between Woodland, Co. Meath, and Kingscourt, Co. Cavan.

The connection between Co Cavan and Co Tyrone will pass through Co Monaghan. The two projects in question were proposed in order:

- To increase the security and reliability of electricity supply to all households, businesses and other customers throughout the island of Ireland.
- To facilitate the use of even more renewable energy such as from wind farms, waves, tidal and biomass, to connect to the electricity network. The Irish Government has set out an ambitious target of 40% renewable generation by 2020.
- To ensure there is enough capacity to transmit bulk supplies of power in order to meet energy demand in the coming years and it is anticipated that demand will continue to increase over time and that these projects are required to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place to meet this demand.
- To support growth and boost existing industry in the region and ensure continuing reliability of supply.
- To increase competition and therefore reduce the cost of electricity to consumers.

In a statutory report, The Monaghan County Manager concluded that the variation to the County Development Plan contravened the objectives of the National Spatial Strategy; would be directly contrary to the Government's Energy Policy; and would contravene the National Development Plan and the Border Regional Planning Guidelines.

Ends