

24 July 2009

Public's queries answered by EirGrid

EirGrid is writing to many members of the public in Cavan, Meath and Monaghan to answer the most common queries received over the past few months.

Community Update brochures, outlining answers to frequently asked questions, have been posted to landowners, interest groups, elected representatives, strategic stakeholders and members of the public. The information will also be available at www.eirgrid.com from Tuesday 28 July.

Tomas Mahony, EirGrid Project Manager, said: "Since the preferred route corridors were announced in April 2009, EirGrid has received many queries from landowners and other stakeholders about the likely impacts of the new power lines. We've published answers to many of the questions and have sent copies to everyone who has been in touch with us over the last number of months.

"Most questions have focused on planning, construction, the feasibility of undergrounding, indemnification, compensation and property. We understand many of these issues can be complex and we hope this Community Update will help address them.

"We're eager for members of the public, groups, landowners or elected representatives to get in touch with us before 31 July. This is especially important over the coming weeks, as from the start of August EirGrid will be increasingly focusing on preparing a planning application. People will have a further opportunity to comment on the new power lines when the planning application is made to An Bord Pleanála later this year."

Contact has been made with hundreds of relevant landowners along the length of the preferred routes for the Meath-Cavan and Cavan-Tyrone lines and EirGrid is urging them to get in touch as soon as possible with any further queries.

Suggestions regarding the line route and tower locations received during landowner meetings are being carefully considered and will be included in the future planning application where possible.

EirGrid's project team is available on the phone at 1890 25 26 90, Mondays to Fridays from 9am to 5pm. The email address is meathcavanpower@eirgrid.com or cavantyroneinterconnector@eirgrid.com

Face-to-face meetings can be held at any venue or at the EirGrid information centres in Navan, open Tuesdays from 1pm until 7pm, and Carrickmacross, open Wednesdays from 1pm until 7pm.

-ENDS-

For further information please contact Eimear Fitzpatrick on 01 709 8001 or 087 413 9387

Notes to Editors:

Among the most commonly asked questions, to date, are:

1. *What is the situation in Denmark? Is it true that they are putting all lines underground?*

EirGrid has consulted with its counterpart in Denmark and can confirm that this is incorrect. The strategy for the future development of Denmark's 400kV network has been misunderstood and misrepresented by people outside of Denmark, who are opposed to the construction of 400kV overhead lines in their own countries. Denmark needs to strengthen the 'backbone' of its 400kV network and proposes to do this by constructing a new double circuit 400kV overhead line. This project is expected to be completed by 2020. Beyond that, they have expressed an aspiration that 'non-backbone' 400kV power lines be placed underground and have commissioned a research and development programme, in association with Danish universities, to investigate the feasibility of this. The proposed power lines for the North East of Ireland can be considered 'backbone' infrastructure. Full details of the strategy for the expansion and undergrounding of the Danish electricity transmission grid can be found on the website of the Danish transmission system owner: www.energinet.dk.

2. *I have heard rumours about possible health effects from the power lines; will EirGrid indemnify my family, guests and me against these possible effects?*

EirGrid and ESB are companies, owned by the State. They jointly design, construct, operate and maintain the electricity transmission network. They do this in compliance with all national and international guidelines and in accordance with 'best practice'. They are jointly satisfied from the totality of studies and the views of international authoritative agencies that the balance of evidence is that overhead transmission lines proposed for use do not have any adverse effect on public health. Accordingly, the issue of

indemnification in respect of perceived health effects does not arise in the context of the proposed lines.

3. *What stage is the project at now?*

The project is proceeding along the normal development timeline. We are currently in Phases 3 and 4, which involve landowner consultation, leading to the determination of the line and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and planning application. The planning application for this project will be submitted shortly to An Bord Pleanála, the independent national board responsible for planning applications and appeals in Ireland. The application to An Bord Pleanála is specifically governed by the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006.

4. *What is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?*

Electricity transmission projects such as these require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be included as part of the planning application. An EIS is a document that sets out the possible impact that a proposed development may have on an area. An EIS firstly assesses the current situation in the area with regard to health, noise, ecology, visual amenity, air quality, flora, and fauna. It will then examine the possible impacts a proposed development might have on each of these and put forward design or other measures that can be taken to avoid or to reduce these effects to acceptable levels.

5. *Where do I view the planning application and EIS?*

In line with statutory requirements, EirGrid will make the application and the EIS available for inspection and for purchase for a period of at least six weeks. The documents will be available to view at the Navan and Carrickmacross Information Centres and in the Meath, Monaghan, and Cavan Local Authority offices. They will also be on view at the An Bord Pleanála Head Offices. EirGrid will publish notice of the proposed application in local newspapers before submitting the application to An Bord Pleanála.