CP966 Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade, Step 4

Consultation Summary Report

EirGrid

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Contents

1. Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of responses received to the Step 4 Consultation on the proposed Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade, undertaken by EirGrid between 31 August and 22 November 2021. The Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade project is intended to add a high-capacity underground electricity connection between the Dunstown substation in Kildare and the Woodland substation in Meath.

EirGrid has identified four potential route options for the underground cables and assessed each one against multiple criteria. The Step 4 Consultation sought views on all four options, as well as respondents' views on the project more broadly, and suggestions for any major events and festivals in the area that EirGrid should consider in scheduling the project.

Consultation process

The consultation was owned and managed by EirGrid Group. Traverse, an independent consultancy specialising in consultation analysis, was commissioned to analyse responses to the consultation and report on the findings.

EirGrid promoted the consultation for two weeks before it opened, and throughout the twelve-week consultation period, through Community Forum meetings, onsite engagement in the project area, stakeholder engagement, public webinars, multi-channel advertisements and a project website. Further details on the consultation promotion can be found in Chapter 2.

Consultation responses

In total, this consultation received 108 responses. Responses to the consultation were submitted via an online consultation portal for submissions and questionnaires, by email and by post. The consultation received 38 online responses, 61 hardcopy responses and 9 letters and emails.

Every response received was analysed and coded using a coding framework and then reported on. A detailed description of Traverse's approach to the handling, analysis and reporting of responses can be found in Chapter 2.

The views and personal opinions outlined in this report are those of the people who responded to this consultation and are reported on as they were expressed. In

common with all consultations, responses are from a self-selecting sample of respondents and may not reflect the views of the wider population.

Views on Option A (Red Option)

Option A is the most westerly of the shortlisted cable route options and is potentially also the longest of the four options.

Many respondents express support for Option A, often saying that it would have less of an impact on local people and communities than the other proposed options. Some respondents believe that this option would be less disruptive to agricultural land, while a small number say that it would have less impact on the environment than other options.

A few respondents oppose Option A, while several raise concerns about this option, often focused on the possibility that it would disrupt traffic, with some respondents claiming that there is already a high volume of traffic locally and that the area has recently been subject to construction works that disrupted road usage. A small number of respondents raise concerns about other potential impacts on local communities, referring to the possibility of dust, noise, or restrictions on movement due to works.

Views on Option B (Green Option)

Option B has similar parts to Option A but differs in the section between the R156 and the Rathcoffey area.

Some respondents believe that the Green Option would be less disruptive to people and communities than other proposed options, claiming that commuters would be less affected by this option as disruption would be limited to less populous areas.

A small number of respondents oppose Option B, while several raise concerns about this option, with some referring to its potential negative impact on local people and communities. These respondents express concern about the cable's route, which they say could cause disruption to areas zoned for development, as well as heritage sites and existing infrastructure. Some respondents worry that this option would exacerbate existing traffic issues, including on the R403 and narrow local roads.

Views on Option C (Orange Option)

Option C is likely to be the shortest of the four options, however it will potentially cross more agricultural land than the other options.

Several respondents support this option, saying that it is the shortest route and would have the most off-road sections, while others say that it would cause the least disruption to traffic and therefore also to commuters. A few respondents support this option's use of agricultural land, while a similar number say that this option would be the most direct route and the easiest option to implement.

Some respondents oppose Option C, while some raise concerns about this option, feeling that it would be too disruptive to local residents and businesses, and to the environment, including schemes dedicated to the protection and study of native species. A small number of participants express concern about the impact of this option on agricultural land, raising concerns about potential restrictions of access to land holdings. A few respondents believe that this option would be difficult to deliver.

Views on Option D (Blue Option)

Option D would affect the least amount of agricultural land of all the shortlisted options.

Many respondents express support for the Blue Option, with some saying that it would cause the least disruption to people and communities and that traffic impacts would be minimised. A small number of respondents say that this option would have a low environmental impact.

A small number of respondents oppose Option D, while several raise concerns about this option, some of whom worry about the impact that it would have on traffic in the local area. These respondents feel that this option would exacerbate existing traffic issues, adding that the area has already been subject to works that have disrupted road usage. A small number of respondents raise concerns about the potential impact of this option on local communities and people, including businesses and agriculture. Others are concerned about the potential damage to soil quality, natural habitats or environmental projects concerned with the protection and study of native species.

Views on the project generally

Some respondents express support for the project overall, saying that the project is needed, that it would bring economic benefits to the area and the country, that it would support job creation, and that it would contribute to the development of a resilient energy network based on renewable sources. A few respondents express support for the fact that the routes generally follow the road network, saying that this would ensure ease of access for maintenance.

Several respondents express concern about the project generally, with a small number of respondents worrying about the potential for cable installation to impact on road safety and traffic use in the area, including on the L5041 and around Maynooth, Prosperous, and Clane more generally.

Regarding the potential negative impact of the project on the local area, a small number of respondents voice concerns about the integrity of historical and recreational assets, including the Royal and Grand Canals, while others refer to the potential negative effects of the project on local people, the equine industry, and on development in the area.

Other issues raised by a few respondents include: the potential health effects of the cable on local people, the need to minimise environmental impact and mitigate any such impact, and the possibility that underground cables would be expensive or difficult to access or maintain.

Major events and festivals

Some respondents offer suggestions for major events and festivals that EirGrid should be aware of in scheduling the project. These suggestions include sporting competitions such as fishing, hunting and racing, as well as cultural events such as Seachtain na Gaeilge, Féile na Sollán, parades at Bodenstown, Straffan Car Boot Sale, and national holidays such as St Patrick's Day and Christmas.

A small number of respondents offer additional, more general, suggestions, saying that EirGrid should avoid scheduling works in the summer or, on the other hand, that school term-time should be avoided. Respondents say that EirGrid should be mindful of commuters' and farmers' needs when scheduling works.

Views on the consultation

Some respondents express support for the consultation process in general terms, saying that it was informative, that the materials were helpful and appropriate, and that they welcome the opportunity to provide feedback.

A small number of participants raise general concerns about the consultation materials, often querying the social impact ratings given to options, while a few others believe that the maps provided were not helpful. A few respondents say that the materials lack information about project timelines and cost, that the options have been drafted on the basis of out-dated information, and that the consultation period was too short and inadequately promoted.
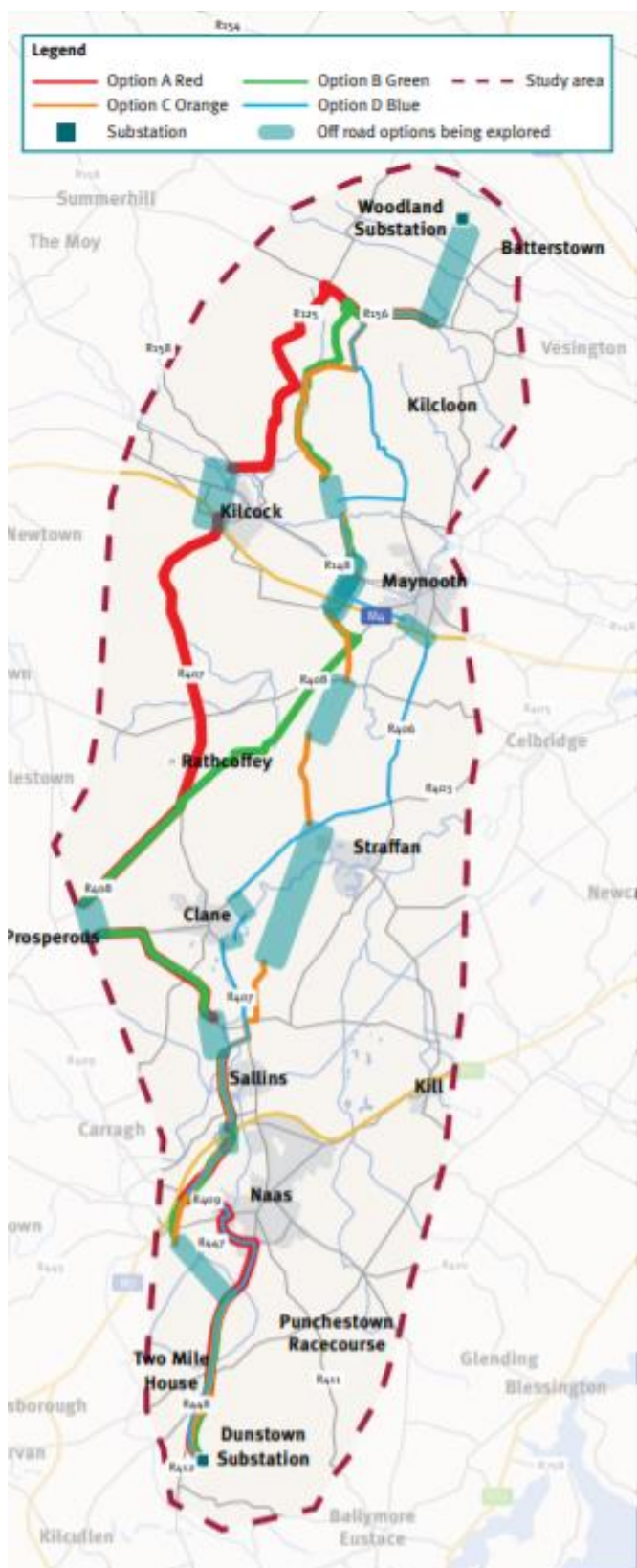
2. Introduction

2.1. About this report

This report provides a summary of responses to the Step 4 Consultation on the proposed Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade project. This consultation requested feedback on four underground route options for a high-capacity electricity connection between Dunstown substation in Kildare and Woodland substation in Meath. The consultation also sought feedback on EirGrid's approach to the project more broadly, on any local events that EirGrid should consider in scheduling the project, and on the consultation process itself.

2.2. About the Kildare-Meath Grid Update

EirGrid brings power from where it is generated to where it is needed throughout Ireland. The Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade will add a high-capacity electricity connection that will more effectively transfer power to the east of the country and distribute it within the network in Kildare, Meath and surrounding counties.

The project is intended to enable further renewable energy generation in line with Government policy ambitions of achieving at least 70%, and up to 80%, of electricity from renewable sources by 2030. It will also help meet the growing demand for electricity in the east. This growth is due to increased economic activity and the planned connection of new large-scale IT industry infrastructure and other industry infrastructure in the region. For more information about the project, including the consultation brochure, visit the EirGrid website: http://www.eirgridgroup.com/the-grid/projects/capital-project-966/the-project/

The four proposed options are shown in Figure 1 on the following page. These options are Option A (Red Option), Option B (Green Option), Option C (Orange Option) and Option D (Blue Option). Descriptions of each option are provided at the start of each of the four following chapters.

Figure 1: Map of the four proposed options

2.3.   About this consultation

The consultation opened on 31 August 2021 and remained open for twelve weeks, closing on 22 November 2021. This consultation is part of EirGrid's six step approach to grid development which is outlined below in Figure 1.

Figure 2: EirGrid's six step approach to grid development projects

In Step 3, EirGrid identified the 400 kV underground cable option as the best performing option to progress for this project. As part of Step 4, EirGrid has identified four potential underground cable route options. EirGrid has continued its investigations, building on those completed for previous steps, assessing and comparing these investigations under five categories, as outlined below.

Figure 3: EirGrid's assessment categories

At the end of Step 4, EirGrid will have:

■ informed stakeholders, communities, landowners and members of the public about the Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade,

- listened to and collated feedback from stakeholders including communities, landowners and members of the public, on the four proposed underground cable route options for the upgrade, including local constraints and impacts that each route may have,
- chosen a final route option, identifying exactly where the underground cables will be built.

Consultation promotion

EirGrid undertook a phase of information-giving to promote the consultation amongst local stakeholders, starting two weeks before the consultation opened, and continuing for the duration of the consultation period. This phase included:

- four Community Forum meetings;
- onsite engagement with a Mobile Information Unit visiting nine towns and villages for one week: Batterstown, Kilcock, Maynooth, Straffan, Prosperous, Clane, Sallins, Naas, Two Mile House;
- engagement (including meetings and/or written communications) with multiple stakeholders including:
  - Transport Infrastructure Ireland Kildare Meath Working Group,
  - Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications,
  - Local Authorities: Meath County Council, Kildare County Council, Maynooth Community Council,
  - Business stakeholders: Kildare Chamber, Meath Chamber, Enterprise Ireland, the IDA,
  - Public Participation Networks: Kildare Partnership, Meath Partnership,
  - Elected representatives: including TDs from Meath East, Meath West, Kildare North and Kildare South, as well as Senators,
  - Kildare Councillors from Athy Municipal District, Kildare-Newbridge Municipal District, Celbridge-Leixlip Municipal District, Clane-Maynooth Municipal District, and Naas Municipal District,
  - Meath Councillors from Ashbourne Municipal District, Ratoath Municipal District, and Trim Municipal District,
  - Two Mile House Says No (battery objection group),
  - Irish Rail
- two public webinars;
- a media campaign in regional press and radio, social media (paid and organic), locally targeted advertising on digital screens and ad-boards, GAA pitch sponsorships (3-year agreements), a project website and online consultation portal;
- the distribution of a project information leaflet and freepost questionnaire to every home in the study area (approximately 42,800).

2.4. Responses received

A total of 108 responses were received during the consultation period. Table 1 below gives a breakdown of the type of responses received.

Response Type	Count
Online response form & submissions	38
Hardcopy response form	61
Letters and emails	9

Table 1: Breakdown of responses received

Three channels were provided for submission of responses to the consultation:

- **online:** by using the consultation portal at consult.eirgrid.ie, accessible via the EirGrid website,
- **email:** by emailing the project's dedicated email address, kildaremeath@eirgrid.com, administered by the project team at EirGrid,
- **post:** by sending in a hardcopy response to the address provided by EirGrid.

Published responses to the consultation are available for review on EirGrid's consultation portal: https://consult.eirgrid.ie/node/2055/submissions

The consultation response form contained six open questions. An additional four questions sought demographic information about the respondent and how they heard about the consultation. The consultation response form is included in Appendix A below, which also contains high-level information about the options proposed. A respondent breakdown is included in Appendix B below, providing respondent demographic data and a list of organisations that respondents say that they represent.

Table 2 below sets out the questions asked by the consultation questionnaire, as well as the number of responses received to each question.

Question		Count
1. Please provide your comments in relation to each route option. Your comments may include route-specific	Option A: Red Option	64
	Option B: Green Option	43

issues that you want us to be aware of or suggestions about alternative routing. Your comments may also express concerns or highlight opportunities.	Option C: Orange Option	47
	Option D: Blue Option	54
2. Please provide any other comments you have about the approach we have taken on this project.		61
3. Are there regular or annual major events, festivals, or similar in your local area that you would like us to be aware of as we plan the scheduling of this project?		28

Table 2: The number of responses to each question.

Respondents do not always provide an answer to every question on the response form. In addition to this, some respondents provide responses in a format that does not follow the response form structure; these responses have been allocated to Question 2. Our approach to coding, outlined below, allows us to capture comments relevant to each question wherever a topic has been raised.

2.5.   Data processing

EirGrid commissioned Traverse, an independent consultancy specialising in consultation analysis, to process, code and report on the responses received to the consultation.

Submissions received were recorded in a database for coding and categorised into types (for example letter, email or response form). Traverse and EirGrid agreed on processes to ensure that all data was handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The online and hardcopy response forms included statements on data protection, including respondents' rights under GDPR, explaining how data would be used and for what purpose. Though respondents who provided views in other formats did not receive a data protection statement, care has been taken to ensure that no individual respondents are identifiable in this report.

2.6.   Coding

To consistently analyse open text responses, Traverse developed a coding framework. An experienced analyst reviewed an early sample of responses and designed an initial framework of codes. The framework was then adapted as analysis

of further responses was carried out to ensure that it reflected the themes raised across all responses.

Each code represents a particular issue, and these are grouped according to unifying themes and sentiments. In this way, the summary report draws on and reflects the responses received and summarises the full range of issues raised by respondents. The full coding framework is provided in Appendix C, with a note on how it has been used.

2.7. Reading this report

Each chapter reports on responses to a particular question (and relevant comments from responses that did not follow the response form structure such as emails and letters), breaking the issues down into comments expressing support for, or concerns about, EirGrid's proposals, as well as suggestions for how the project might be delivered.

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 3 summarises feedback about Option A: Red Option,
- Chapter 4 summarises feedback about Option B: Green Option,
- Chapter 5 summarises feedback about Option C: Orange Option,
- Chapter 6 summarises feedback about Option D: Blue Option,
- Chapter 7 summarises general feedback about the project,
- Chapter 8 summarises feedback about local events that EirGrid should consider when scheduling works,
- Chapter 9 summarises feedback about the consultation process.

Use of quantifiers

As with all consultations, those who chose to submit feedback constitute a self-selecting sample, meaning that they have chosen to reply, rather than being part of a recruited sample designed to be representative of an area. A respondent's decision to apply may be affected by any number of factors, including awareness of the feedback process, involvement with a local organisation, experience of using certain roads, or the potential for their property to be affected by the proposals. As such, the feedback gives a useful reflection of the views of those who have chosen to reply but cannot be taken to be a representative cross-section of the local community.

When summarising qualitative feedback under each section of the report, quantifiers have been used to provide a sense of the frequency with which a given issue has been raised in relation to other issues. The following quantifiers are used in this report:

- **a few:** comments made by 1 to 5 respondents,
- **a small number:** comments made by 6 to 10 respondents,
- **some:** comments made by 11 to 20 respondents,
- **several:** comments made by 21 to 30 respondents,
- **many:** comments made by more than 30 respondents.

Please note that the nature of qualitative analysis means that there is always a small margin for variation, and as such these numbers should always be seen as approximate.

3. Option A (Red Option)

3.1. Overview

This chapter summarises comments on Option A (the Red Option) for the underground cable route from Woodland Station to Dunstown Station. This route is the most westerly of the shortlisted cable route options, has the least estimated off-road sections and is potentially also the longest of the four options, although Option D is described as being the same length. The consultation response form in Appendix A provides a comparison of the proposed options in the form of a table (see page 41).

As described in 2.6 above, a coding framework was developed to support the reporting of the data in this chapter. Appendix C provides the list of codes used in relation to this option, as well as a count of the number of responses to which each code was applied.

3.2. Comments expressing support for Option A

Support	
General	Many respondents express support for the Red Option, some of whom do so in general terms, describing this option as "the best option" or "reasonable", while a few respondents say that this option represents the most direct route, and follows existing roads.
Less disruption: people and communities	Many respondents argue that this option would have less of an impact on the surrounding area than the other proposed options. Some of these respondents say that this option would be less disruptive to local communities than the other options, arguing that less landowners would be affected, and that the route follows secondary roads and would not contribute to traffic in areas that are already congested, such as Sallins, Clane and Kilcock. A few respondents argue that it may be a positive aspect of this option that Heavy Goods Vehicles could be disrupted in travelling through Clane.

Less disruption: agricultural land	Some respondents say that this option would have the least impact on agricultural land. These respondents say that agriculture is important to the area, that high-output soils would not be affected, and that the additional length of this option in comparison to others is justified on the grounds of its being the option least disruptive to agricultural land.
Less disruption: environment	A small number of respondents say that the Red Option would have less of an environmental impact than other options, citing the consultation materials and the fact that there is a lower estimated figure for off-road sections. A few respondents say that this option would involve placing cables through peaty soils; these respondents believe that peaty soils are sources of carbon emissions, and therefore claim that this option, in making use of such soils, would offset the damage they cause.
Support but prefer other	A few respondents indicate that the Red Option is their second preference.

3.3. Comments expressing concern about Option A

Opposition	
General	A few respondents state their opposition to the Red Option.

Concern	
Traffic	Several respondents express concern about aspects of the Red Option, some of whom refer to the potential for this option to impact on traffic in the area. These respondents say that there is already a high volume of traffic locally, including HGVs, and that the R407 has recently been subject to works over a lengthy period. Respondents say that works on the L2002 would be disruptive to traffic, as the road is used as a bypass for Clane.
People and communities	A small number of respondents raise concerns about the potential impact of this option on local communities, sometimes referring to

	the possibility of dust, noise, or restrictions on movement due to works. Respondents say that heritage buildings or sewage infrastructure in Prosperous could be damaged during construction. A few respondents say that recent or current development projects have already impacted on their home or on the locality, while a similar number raise the potential disruption to the operation of Larchill Arcadian Garden due to works on the R125.
Route	A few respondents say that this option is too long or makes use of a route that is overly complicated.
Environment	A few respondents say that this option would have a significant impact on the environment.
Agricultural land	A few respondents say that this option would affect agricultural land.
Cost	A few respondents say that the Red Option would cost too much.

3.4. Suggestions about Option A

General	
Suggestion	A few respondents offer suggestions for the Red Option, which include: - avoiding Kilcock, - routing the cables along roads, - maintaining access on the R125 during construction, in both directions, through use of traffic light management, - amending the route between Prosperous and Sallins to pass through Millicent and Digby Bridge, then along the canal walkway, restoring the path afterwards to an improved standard.

4. Option B (Green Option)

4.1. Overview

This chapter summarises comments on Option B (the Green Option) for the underground cable route from Woodland Station to Dunstown Station. This route has similar parts to Option A but differs in the section between the R156 and the Rathcoffey area. The consultation response form in Appendix A provides a comparison of the proposed options in the form of a table (see page 41).

As described in 2.6 above, a coding framework was developed to support the reporting of the data in this chapter. Appendix C provides the list of codes used in relation to this option, as well as a count of the number of responses to which each code was applied.

4.2. Comments expressing support for Option B

Support	
General	Some respondents express support for the Green Option, a small number of whom do so in general terms. A few respondents comment that it is a similar route to the Red Option but add that they prefer the Green Option.
Less disruption: people and communities	A small number of respondents argue that the Green Option would be less disruptive to people and communities than other proposed options. These respondents feel that commuters would be less affected by the Green Option, as disruption would be limited to less populous, more rural, locations. A few respondents support the Green Option because it would be further away from their home and would generate less noise. A similar number of respondents argue that this option would have a lower impact on farming activity.
Support but prefer other	A few respondents support the Green Option but say that they prefer other options. These respondents feel that this option is either the second- or third-best option.

4.3. Comments expressing concern about Option B

Opposition	
General	A small number of respondents state their opposition to the Green Option.

Concern	
People and communities	Several respondents express concern about the Green Option, some of whom refer to the potential impact of this option on people and communities. These respondents express concern about the cable's route, which they say could cause disruption to areas zoned for development under the Naas Local Area Plan, as well as heritage sites and existing infrastructure. A few respondents argue that the Green Option would cause more disruption overall compared to the other options. A similar number of respondents express concern about the health consequences of the Green Option on local people.
Traffic	Some respondents express concern about the impact of the Green Option on local traffic. These respondents feel that this option could exacerbate existing traffic issues, including on the R403 between Prosperous and Clane and between Clane and Maynooth, while a few respondents argue that this option would disproportionately impact on areas with narrower roads. A few respondents voice concerns about the traffic from vehicles associated with the construction of this option.
Environment	A small number of respondents are concerned that the Green Option would have a negative environmental impact. A few of these respondents feel that the environmental impact would be 'low to moderate', while a few others feel that it would have a high environmental impact.
Visual and landscape	A few respondents voice their concern about the number of off-road sections that the Green Option would have.

Cost	A few respondents feel that the Green Option would be too expensive.

4.4. Suggestions about Option B

General	
Suggestion	A few respondents offer suggestions for the Green Option, which include: ■ avoiding Rathcoffey and Moortown, ■ bypassing Prosperous, ■ considering local people during the construction phase.

5. Option C (Orange Option)

5.1. Overview

This chapter summarises comments on Option C (the Orange Option) for the underground cable route from Woodland Station to Dunstown Station. This route is likely to be the shortest of the four options, however it will potentially cross more agricultural land than the other options. The consultation response form in Appendix A provides a comparison of the proposed options in the form of a table (see page 41).

As described in 2.6 above, a coding framework was developed to support the reporting of the data in this chapter. Appendix C provides the list of codes used in relation to this option, as well as a count of the number of responses to which each code was applied.

5.2. Comments expressing support for Option C

Support	
General	Several respondents express support for the Orange Option, some of whom do so in general terms. A few of these respondents prefer this option because it is the shortest route and would have the most off-road sections. A similar number of respondents say that this option would be the preferred route for the community of Clane.
Less disruption: people and communities	Some respondents voice support for the Orange Option because they believe that it would cause the least disruption to traffic and therefore also to commuters. A few of these respondents feel that the Orange Option would also have the lowest social impact.
Less disruption: agricultural land	A few respondents support the Orange Option's use of agricultural land, which they feel would be less disruptive to the general public. A few of these respondents feel that agricultural land should not be protected from use for infrastructural development, saying that using such land for infrastructure would

	mean that it would have multiple uses instead of being under-used, and that the land will recover quickly.
Deliverability	A few respondents say that the Orange Option would be the most direct route and the easiest option to implement.
Less disruption: environment	A few respondents support the Orange Option because it would have a 'low to moderate' environmental impact.

5.3. Comments expressing concern about Option C

Opposition	
General	Some respondents state their opposition to the Orange Option, with a few saying that this is their least preferred option.

Concern	
People and communities	Several respondents express concern about the Orange Option, some of whom feel that it would be too disruptive to local residents. A few respondents also say that this option would affect land zoned for development under the Naas Local Area Plan, or stud land.
Environment	A small number of respondents voice concerns about the environmental impact of the Orange Option. A few of these respondents feel that the Orange Option would detrimentally affect local water quality and damage natural habitats, such as grasslands and forests, which also operate as carbon sinks. A similar number of respondents worry about the potential impact of this option on areas currently used for the protection and study of pollinators and other native species under the GLAS scheme or the National Biodiversity Data Centre.
Agricultural land	A small number of participants express concern about the agricultural impact that the Orange Option would have, including through by restricting farmers' access to land holdings. A few of these respondents feel that the Orange Option would

	have the biggest impact on farming and agriculture of all the shortlisted options.
Route	A few respondents worry that the Orange Option's route is indirect, with the highest number of off-road sections.
Deliverability	A few respondents raise concerns about the deliverability of the Orange Option, saying that it would be expensive and take longer to complete, or that some land will be difficult to access for construction works.

5.4. Suggestions about Option C

General
Suggestion   A few respondents offer suggestions for the Orange Option, which include: ■ running the cable beneath the L6003 and L60031, or east of these roads, to avoid Blackhall Stud,   ■ avoiding Straffan,   ■ protecting biodiversity, including old-growth biodiversity, and any habitats for ground-nesting birds,   ■ minimising encroachment on land,   ■ planning around the needs of farmers, including timing construction around crops.

6. Option D (Blue Option)

6.1. Overview

This chapter summarises comments on Option D (the Blue Option) for the underground cable route from Woodland Station to Dunstown Station. This route would affect the least amount of agricultural land of all the shortlisted options. The consultation response form in Appendix A provides a comparison of the proposed options in the form of a table (see page 41).

As described in 2.6 above, a coding framework was developed to support the reporting of the data in this chapter. Appendix C provides the list of codes used in relation to this option, as well as a count of the number of responses to which each code was applied.

6.2. Comments expressing support for Option D

Support	
General	Many respondents express support for the Blue Option, some of whom do so in general terms, saying for example that it is "the best option".
Less disruption: people and communities	Some respondents express support for the Blue Option as they feel that it would cause the least disruption to people and communities. A few of these respondents feel that this option would minimise traffic disruption, saying that it would use minor roads. A few other respondents say that the route follows wider roads that would allow traffic to flow during construction. A few respondents feel that the Blue Option would impact less on the health of local people.
Less disruption: environment	A small number of respondents voice support for the Blue Option because they believe that it would have a low environmental impact.
Deliverability	A few respondents voice support for the Blue Option as they believe that it would be the easiest option to deliver. A few of

	these respondents support the Blue Option's use of existing roadways, which they say ensures that the cable would be accessible for maintenance.
Less disruption: agricultural land	A few respondents voice support for the Blue Option, which they say would have the least impact on agricultural land.
Support but prefer other	A few respondents feel that this option is the second-most preferable option, adding that they prefer the Red or Green Options.

6.3. Comments expressing concern about Option D

Opposition	
General	A small number of respondents state their opposition to the Blue Option, with a few respondents saying that this is their least preferred option.

Concern	
Traffic	Several respondents express concern about the Blue Option, some of whom worry about the impact that this option would have on traffic in the local area. A few of these participants say that Clane is an important commuter town, adding that traffic disruption there should be avoided if possible.
	A small number of these respondents believe that the choice of the Blue Option would exacerbate existing traffic issues, including around the R403, R406, and R407. A few respondents also claim that Clane has recently experienced high levels of traffic disruption, both from Irish Water projects and from house building, adding that additional disruption would be unwelcome.
People and communities	A small number of respondents raise concerns about the potential impact that the Blue Option would have on local communities and people. A few of these respondents feel that

	this option would be detrimental to their home or land, while a similar number voice concerns about the negative effect that the Blue Option would have on businesses and agriculture, including bloodstock. A few respondents highlight the proximity of the route to housing occupied by older people, referring to the potential health effects of noise or dust from construction works.
Environment	A few respondents highlight the potential effects of this option on the natural environment. A few of these participants voice concerns about the potential impact of construction works on soil quality on farms that are using green farming methods, such as regenerative farming.

A few other respondents express concern about the Blue Option's potential damage to natural habitats or environmental projects concerned with the protection and study of pollinators. A few respondents voice their concern about the potential impact of this option on biodiversity, including the habitats of ground nesting birds.

A few other respondents voice concerns about the potential for the construction of this option to impact on river water quality. |
| **Route** | A few respondents say that the route is too long or that it should follow the Sallins bypass. |
| **Cost** | A few respondents feel that the Blue Option is too expensive. |

6.4. Suggestions about Option D

General	
Suggestion	A few respondents offer suggestions for the Blue Option, which include: ■ avoiding road disruption around Clane by following the Old Dublin Road from Abbeyfield to Capdoo, ■ running the cable route beneath or to the north of the L20042 to avoid Blackhall Stud, ■ being considerate during construction of the potential future construction of a Clane bypass, which would include a river crossing to the east of the town.

7. Feedback on the project generally

7.1. Overview

This chapter summarises feedback on the project generally.

As described in 2.6 above, a coding framework was developed to support the reporting of the data in this chapter. Appendix C provides the list of codes used in relation to this option, as well as a count of the number of responses to which each code was applied.

7.2. Comments expressing support for the project

Support	
Need case	Some respondents express support of the project overall, with a small number of them saying that the project is needed. A few of these respondents' comments speak to the potential economic benefits of the project, with specific reference to the national economy, the region's technology industry, and the possibility for local job creation.
	A few respondents voice support for bringing renewable energy to areas of high demand. A similar number feel that the project would help to create a more robust and resilient energy network based on renewable sources.
Route/ undergrounding	A few respondents express support for the fact that the routes generally follow the road network. These respondents refer to the importance of the route following existing roads, which they feel would ensure easy access for maintenance. A few of these respondents say that the choice of roads to follow should be determined by the amount of disruption that their use for the project would cause, adding that motorways should be avoided.

7.3.   Comments expressing concern about the project

Concern	
Traffic/access	Several respondents express concern about the project generally.
	A small number of these respondents voice concerns associated with the fact that the routes often follow the road network. These respondents worry about the effect of cable installation on traffic flow, and the potential for the construction of the project to exacerbate existing traffic issues, particularly on the L5041 and around Maynooth, Prosperous, and Clane more generally.
	A few respondents feel that the project could increase both the frequency of accidents and the number of road hazards.
	One stakeholder expresses concern about the effect of the project on its ability to maintain and improve roads and operational infrastructure, including embankments, drainage, bridges, and road furniture. This respondent also highlights that cabling may need to be moved as roads are changed, moved, or upgraded in the future.
	This body provides detailed guidance about EirGrid's responsibilities while planning to install cables under or near roads, including the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). It refers to a range of schemes, guidelines, regulations and publications to be considered. This respondent also draws attention to issues around road safety, traffic management, road use, and working across or near motorways.
People and communities	A small number of participants voice concerns about the integrity of historical and recreational assets, including the Royal and Grand Canals, as well as the possible impact of the project on local people and residences.
	A few respondents feel that the project could have detrimental effects on the equine industry. These respondents express concern about the effect of soil disturbance from this project on

	stud land, including the movement of selenium from the sub-soil to the grass during cable installation.
	A few respondents raise questions about the health risks associated with being in close proximity to the power lines, including while sitting in traffic. These respondents raise particular questions about the effects of such proximity on those managing pre-existing health conditions with electronic devices, including hearing aids or pacemakers.
Route	A few respondents feel that they would prefer the route to go through agricultural land rather than through roads or biodiverse areas, saying that agricultural land is likely to lack biodiversity and that its disruption would affect fewer people. These respondents add that use of agricultural land would help to ensure that cables would be easy to access in future.
	Conversely, a few respondents say that the route should avoid private land where possible, to prevent any problems in accessing the cables in future.
	A few respondents worry that the route chosen would limit future development on the western side of Maynooth and at Kilcock.
Undergrounding	A few respondents believe that an underground network would be difficult to maintain, or voice concern about the cost of an underground solution compared to use of DC technology.
Environment	A few respondents voice concern about how the project might impact on the environment and wildlife, including hedgerows and native woodland, sometimes adding that there is a climate and biodiversity crisis. These respondents believe that the project should aim to minimise its impact on biodiversity, including by following the road network, which they say would minimise the project's impact on natural habitats.
Deliverability	A few respondents raise questions about who would be responsible for the installation and termination of the cable, voicing concerns about the potential use of contractors, which they feel could cause delays due to incompetence.

Supply	A few respondents voice a general concern about the consistency of electricity supply during the project.

7.4.   Suggestions about the project

General	
Suggestion	A small number of respondents offer suggestions for the project overall, which include: ■ inviting members of the local community to determine the exact route the cabling would take through any towns or villages, ■ routing the cable along motorways, as motorways often take the shortest route from one place to another, ■ considering how to compensate people for any disruption they experience, ■ prioritising the route that would have the least financial impact on affected people, ■ planning to mitigate any detrimental effects on biodiversity caused by the project, potentially by planting wildflower meadows and hedgerows, ■ avoiding the felling of mature trees and replacing any felled trees with newly planted ones, ■ using large international suppliers with experience of completing similar projects.

8. Major events and festivals

8.1. Overview

This chapter summarises feedback on major events and festivals in the study area that respondents believe EirGrid should be aware of in scheduling works on the project.

As described in 2.6 above, a coding framework was developed to support the reporting of the data in this chapter. Appendix C provides the list of codes used in relation to this option, as well as a count of the number of responses to which each code was applied.

8.2. Suggestions about major events and festivals

General	

Events and festivals	Some respondents offer suggestions for major events and festivals that EirGrid should be aware of in scheduling the project, including:
	
	■ sporting competitions such as:
	  – fishing competitions held along the canal,
	  – hunting by hunt clubs between October and March,
	  – Punchestown Race Festival;
	■ cultural events such as:
	  – Seachtain na Gaeilge, in the first half of March,
	  – Parades at Bodenstown,
	  – Féile na Sollán/Sallins Tradfest, October,
	  – Straffan Car Boot Sale, held between April and October.
	  – St Patrick's Day,
	  – Christmas.

Other suggestions	A small number of respondents offer additional, more general, suggestions, saying that EirGrid should: ■ avoid summer and the August bank holiday weekend, ■ avoid peak times for traffic, including commuting times of day, and school and university term-time generally, ■ plan around farming activity.

9. The consultation process

9.1. Overview

This chapter summarises feedback by respondents on the consultation process undertaken by EirGrid for this project.

As described in 2.6 above, a coding framework was developed to support the reporting of the data in this chapter. Appendix C provides the list of codes used in relation to this option, as well as a count of the number of responses to which each code was applied.

9.2. Comments expressing support for the consultation

Support	
General	Some respondents express support for the consultation process in general terms. A few of these respondents feel that the consultation process was informative, while a similar number welcome the opportunity to provide feedback.
Materials	A few respondents feel that the consultation materials were helpful, particularly the maps and constraints report. A similar number of respondents feel that the questions asked were appropriate, and that the options presented throughout the consultation were well considered.

9.3. Comments expressing concern about the consultation

Concern	
Materials	A small number of participants raise general concerns about the consultation materials. A few respondents challenge the social impact ratings given to different options, saying for example that any option would have a higher social impact on the people of Clane than the 'low to moderate' rating given. A few other respondents feel that the social impact of

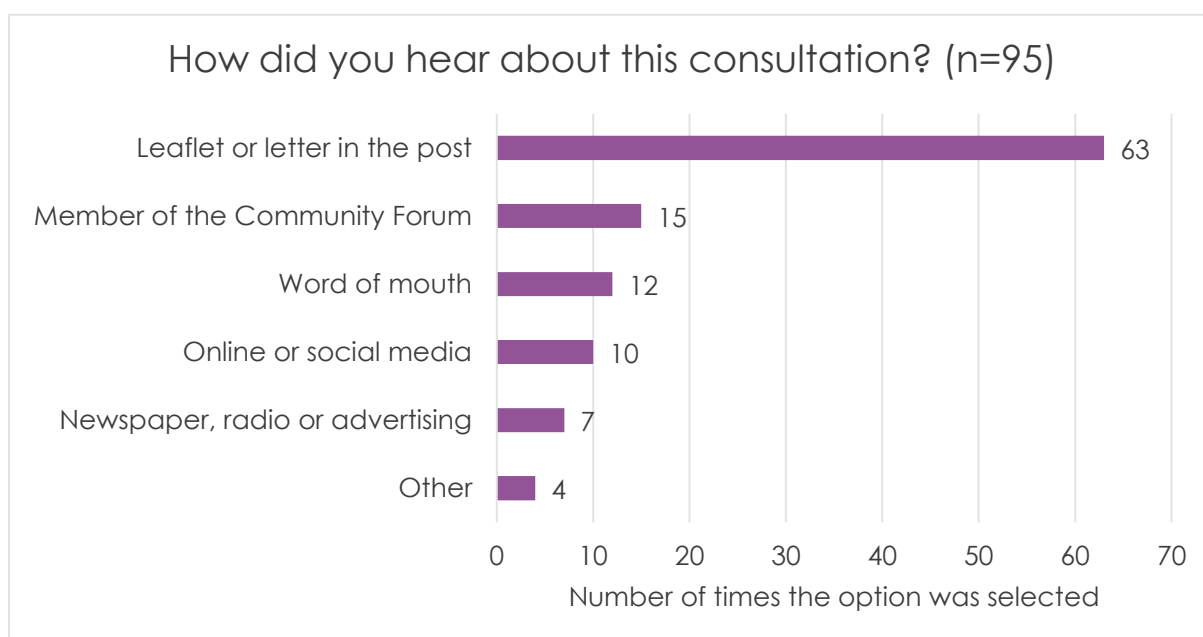|	
	routes using primarily agricultural land should be rated as 'low to moderate', rather than 'moderate to high'.
	A few respondents voice concern about the maps provided, which they feel are too vague. These respondents believe that the maps fail to clearly display the implications of off-road sections, saying that it remains unclear what off-road options are being explored. Other respondents claim that the digital maps are difficult to find.
	A few respondents feel that the consultation materials lack information about project timelines and cost, while a similar number feel that the online approach taken might have excluded older people and digitally excluded people more generally.
Communication	A small number of respondents raise concerns about how information about the consultation was communicated, saying that there was not enough time to prepare their submissions to the consultation.
	A few respondents raise concerns about the use of leaflets, saying that the leaflets did not provide adequate instructions for finding information online. A similar number of respondents feel that the leaflet was not adequately distributed, particularly around Bodenstown.
Decision-making	A few respondents raise concerns about the amount of influence that people responding to the consultation will have on the decisions made.
	A similar number of respondents raise concerns about how land has been categorised in consultation materials, and the impact that this might have on EirGrid's decision-making process. These respondents refer to how land in the Naas area, including sites zoned for Data Centre use and Community and Education use, is described in the consultation material.

9.4. Suggestions about the consultation

Suggestions	
Communication	A small number of respondents provided suggestions about the consultation process, which include: ■ ensuring that residents are informed of any potential disruption or environmental impact associated with each option, ■ communicating with planning stakeholders on projects that might impact on road schemes.
Requests for information	A few respondents request more information about the route around Sallins, and whether the cable would follow the route of the new bypass. A few other respondents request more detailed information about the off-road sections that are being explored. Respondents ask which side of the road cabling will run on, and what the potential impact of cabling might be on future development and on the health of local people and bloodstock. Other issues raised include: the length of time that works would take, the level of traffic disruption that might result, and the level of compensation to be provided to owners of any property that might be encroached upon.

9.5. Responses to the closed question

Respondents were asked to answer a closed question about how they heard about the consultation. The chart on the following page gives a breakdown of responses to this question; note that respondents could select more than one option.

One respondent who selected 'other' says that they heard about the consultation through their church.

How did you hear about this consultation? (n=95)

Option	Number of times the option was selected
Leaflet or letter in the post	63
Member of the Community Forum	15
Word of mouth	12
Online or social media	10
Newspaper, radio or advertising	7
Other	4

Number of times the option was selected

Appendix A: The consultation response form

EIRGRID

Delivering a cleaner energy future

Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade Consultation
31 August 2021 to 22 November 2021

Introduction

The Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade will add a high-capacity underground electricity connection between Dunstown substation in Co. Kildare and Woodland substation in Co. 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 enable further development of renewable energy generation in line with Government policy ambitions of having at least 70% of electricity coming from renewable sources by 2030. This includes transporting electricity from offshore renewable sources.

The project will also help meet the growing demand for electricity in the east. This growth is due to increased economic activity and the planned connection of new large-scale IT industry and other industry infrastructure in Kildare, Meath and Dublin.

We want to hear what you have to say about the four underground cable route options for upgrading the electricity grid between Kildare and Meath.

Give your feedback

This leaflet contains some information about the project. We have included an indicative map to provide an overview of the options.

This leaflet also contains a freepost questionnaire. You can complete it, detach it and return it to us by freepost.

You can access more detailed information online at www.eirgrid.ie/KildareMeath. If you need further guidance or copies of any of our documents, please contact your EirGrid Community Liaison Officer Gráinne Duffy on: 085 887 4798 or KildareMeath@eirgrid.com.

We will consider feedback on all route options before deciding on what the best option is to take into the next step of this project.

Scan me for more information!

About this consultation

We are inviting you to give feedback on the four route options for the Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade. We want to know what you think about each option. Is there anything else we should be taking account of? Have you any other feedback we should consider?

The consultation period is from 31 August to 22 November 2021. We encourage you to engage with us and have your say as early as possible during the consultation period.

Where can I find out more?

Sign up to a webinar

Arrange to speak to a team member directly

Visit our consultation and information portal

All information relating to this project is available on our website: www.eirgrid.ie/KildareMeath. If you need further guidance or copies of any of our documents, please contact your Community Liaison Officer Gráinne Duffy on: 085 887 4798 or KildareMeath@eirgrid.com.

How can I have my say?

Complete this questionnaire and submit it by freepost

Submit your views online at: consult.eirgrid.ie

Email your submission to us at: KildareMeath@eirgrid.com

Write your own submission and freepost it back to us

Our freepost address is: Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade Consultation, EirGrid plc, Freepost FDN 5312, 160 Shelbourne Road, Ballsbridge, D04 FW28.

About the options

We have developed four potential underground cable options for this project. We plan these using principles such as avoiding town and village centres, and maximising the use of local roads. We also consider constraints such as environmental impact, the width of roads and other services in the road such as water, gas and drainage. All routes start in Woodland substation and end in Dunstown substation. All routes cross the Royal Canal and the Grand Canal. Some routes will also need to cross watercourses, railway lines and motorways – however we would propose to drill under these. Please know that we will engage extensively with all relevant bodies, carry out all necessary studies and put in place all risk mitigations before starting these works.

Each option will require some of the cable to be off-road. Where off-road routing is unavoidable, we do not yet know what the exact route may be. For this reason, we highlight a corridor of space on the route map. The off-road section may pass through this corridor. We will determine this after discussing it with the landowners affected. We will avoid agricultural land as far as possible by carefully routing the cable.

Legend

- Option A Red
- Option C Orange
- Substation
- Option B Green
- Option D Blue
- Off road options being explored
- Study area

Detailed interactive maps are available to view at: consult.eirgrid.ie.

At a glance view of the proposed route options

The following table provides an overview of the four underground cable options we are considering for this project. Find more detail online at eirgrid.ie/KildareMeath.

Please note that the route lengths referenced below are indicative only and will be finalised when a full and detailed route is agreed.

Option	Estimated overall length (km)	Estimated off-road sections (km)	Environmental impact	Social impact and potential disruption during construction	Meets technical requirements	Other notable points
Option A (Red)	51	5	Least risk	Low-moderate	Yes	Travels to the west of Kilcock village, longest route, but it affects the least amount of agricultural land of all options.
Option B (Green)	50	8	Low-moderate	Moderate-high	Yes	Travels through Rathcoffey and Moortown.
Option C (Orange)	47	13	Low-moderate	Moderate-high	Yes	Shortest cable but it affects the most agricultural land of all options.
Option D (Blue)	51	6	Least risk	Low-moderate	Yes	

Feedback Questions

Question 1: Please provide your comments in relation to each route option. Your comments may include route-specific issues that you want us to be aware of or suggestions about alternative routing. Your comments may also express concerns or highlight opportunities.

Option A: Red Option

Option B: Green Option

Option C: Orange Option

Option D: Blue Option

Question 2: Please provide any other comments you have about the approach we have taken on this project.

Question 3: Are there regular or annual major events, festivals or similar in your local area that you would like us to be aware of as we plan the scheduling of this project?

If you need more space, please add an additional page or complete your feedback online at consult.eirgrid.ie

Personal Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

EirCode: _____

Organisation (if any): _____

Contact number: _____

Contact Email: _____

If interested, how would you like to receive further updates on this project? (Tick all that apply)

☐ Phone ☐ Email ☐ Post

Data Protection and Privacy Statement

☐ I consent to EirGrid processing my data for the purposes of the Kildare Meath Grid Upgrade project. All information provided to EirGrid will be held by EirGrid personnel and EirGrid's data processors only, for the purpose of engaging with me in the public consultation process. EirGrid's privacy statement is available at: *www.eirgrid.ie/privacy*

☐ I consent to EirGrid publishing my name with this submission. Otherwise this submission will be published anonymously.

(Optional) Questions about this Consultation Process

The questions in this section help us understand your views in relation to this consultation process and will help us best plan future engagement.

How did you hear about this consultation? (Tick all that apply)

☐ Member of the Community Forum ☐ Online or social media
☐ An Elected Representative ☐ Word of mouth
☐ Newspaper, radio or advertising ☐ Other (please specify)
☐ Leaflet or letter in the post

With which gender do you identify?
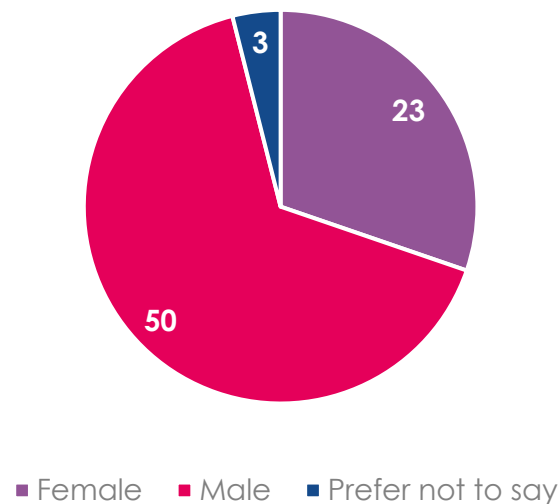
☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other ☐ Prefer not to say

Age?

☐ Under 18 ☐ 18-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49
☐ 50-59 ☐ 60-64 ☐ 65+

Do you or anyone in your household have specific access needs that you would like us to be aware of?

Appendix B: Respondent breakdown
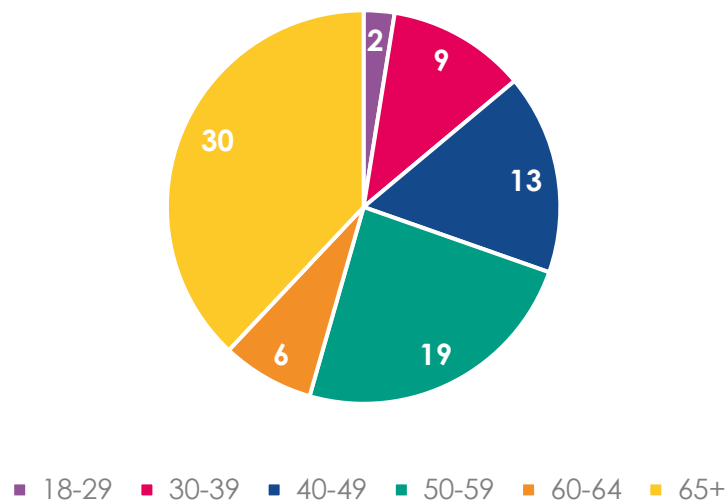
Respondents were asked two demographic questions, one on their gender identification and the other on their age. The charts below provide a breakdown of responses to each of these questions.

With which gender do you identify? (n=76)

- Female: 23
- Male: 50
- Prefer not to say: 3

What is your age? (n=79)

- 18-29: 2
- 30-39: 9
- 40-49: 13
- 50-59: 19
- 60-64: 6
- 65+: 30

Respondents were also asked to give an organisation name. The organisations that respondents said that they represent are:

- Clane Community Council,
- County Meath Chamber,
- Furness Wood Residents Association,
- Godolphin Ireland Limited,
- Larchill Arcadian Gardens,
- Maynooth Community Council,
- Prosperous Community GSS,
- Straffan Community Hall,
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland,
- Venturis Investment Group.

Appendix C: Coding framework and code count

The table below shows the codes that were used in the analysis of open text responses to identify and group the issues, topics and sentiment of the responses.

The table shows the number of individual responses to which each code was applied. These figures give an indication of how frequently any given issue or topic was raised. Please note that the nature of qualitative analysis means that there is always a small margin for variation, and as such these numbers should always be seen as approximate.

It should also be noted that the frequency of an issue being raised does not necessarily correlate with its importance or validity. A frequently raised comment may indicate a commonly held, but incorrect, belief, whilst a comment made infrequently may reflect an important issue that may not be widely known.

Code name	No of responses to which code was applied
Consultation | Concern | Communication	6
Consultation | Concern | Decision-making	3
Consultation | Concern | Materials	10
Consultation | Suggestion | Communication	6
Consultation | Suggestion | Request for information	5
Consultation | Support | General	11
Consultation | Support | Materials	3
Consultation | Support | Promotion	2
General | Concern | Deliverability	1
General | Concern | Environment	2
General | Concern | People & communities	7
General | Concern | Route	4
General | Concern | Supply	1
General | Concern | Traffic / access	9
General | Concern | Undergrounding	2
General | Suggestion	10
General | Support | Need case	9
General | Support | Route / undergrounding	3
Major events | No suggested events / periods	12

Major events | Suggested events / periods | Christmas holidays	1
Major events | Suggested events / periods | Cultural festivals	3
Major events | Suggested events / periods | Fishing competitions	1
Major events | Suggested events / periods | Hunting season	1
Major events | Suggested events / periods | Local markets	1
Major events | Suggested events / periods | Punchestown Festival	1
Major events | Suggested events / periods | St Patrick's Day	1
Major events | Suggested events / periods | Summer holidays	3
Major events | Suggestion other | Agriculture	1
Major events | Suggestion other | Commuting inc schools	4
Option A: Red Option | Concern | Agricultural land	1
Option A: Red Option | Concern | Cost	1
Option A: Red Option | Concern | Environment	1
Option A: Red Option | Concern | People & communities	5
Option A: Red Option | Concern | Route	2
Option A: Red Option | Concern | Traffic	11
Option A: Red Option | Oppose	1
Option A: Red Option | Suggestion	4
Option A: Red Option | Support | General	18
Option A: Red Option | Support | Less disruption | Agricultural land	12
Option A: Red Option | Support | Less disruption | Environment	10
Option A: Red Option | Support | Less disruption | People & communities	20
Option A: Red Option | Support but prefer other	2
Option B: Green Option | Concern | Cost	1
Option B: Green Option | Concern | Environment	6
Option B: Green Option | Concern | People & communities	14
Option B: Green Option | Concern | Traffic	11
Option B: Green Option | Concern | Visual & landscape	2
Option B: Green Option | Oppose	6
Option B: Green Option | Suggestion	3
Option B: Green Option | Support | General	6
Option B: Green Option | Support | Less disruption | People & communities	9
Option B: Green Option | Support but prefer other	5
Option C: Orange Option | Concern | Agricultural land	9
Option C: Orange Option | Concern | Deliverability	2
Option C: Orange Option | Concern | Environment	9
Option C: Orange Option | Concern | People & communities	12
Option C: Orange Option | Concern | Route	3
Option C: Orange Option | Oppose	12
Option C: Orange Option | Suggestion	4
Option C: Orange Option | Support | Deliverability	4
Option C: Orange Option | Support | General	12
Option C: Orange Option | Support | Less disruption | Agricultural land	4
Option C: Orange Option | Support | Less disruption | Environment	1
Option C: Orange Option | Support | Less disruption | People & communities	13

Option D: Blue Option | Concern | Cost	1
Option D: Blue Option | Concern | Environment	2
Option D: Blue Option | Concern | People & communities	7
Option D: Blue Option | Concern | Route	2
Option D: Blue Option | Concern | Traffic	13
Option D: Blue Option | Oppose	6
Option D: Blue Option | Suggestion	3
Option D: Blue Option | Support | Deliverability	5
Option D: Blue Option | Support | General	14
Option D: Blue Option | Support | Less disruption | Agricultural land	3
Option D: Blue Option | Support | Less disruption | Environment	8
Option D: Blue Option | Support | Less disruption | People & communities	11
Option D: Blue Option | Support but prefer other	2

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