

East Meath – North Dublin Grid Upgrade

Community Forum

7pm, 10th August 2022, via Zoom

Attending (members): Gerardine Doyle (Craobh Ciarans GAA club), Helena Merriman (St. Margaret's Parish Hall Committee), Sheelagh Morris (St Margarets Activity Centre), Graine & Richard Newton Craobh Ciaran GAA Club , Liam O Gradaigh (St. Margaret's GAA), Pearse Sutton (St. Margaret's/The Ward), Rob Webb (Tyrrelstown Residents Community Council)

Apologies: Cllr Daniel Whooley

In attendance (EirGrid): Christie Elliott (Project Management Office), Ailbhe Farrell (Senior Engagement Specialist), Jason Kenna (Project Management Office), Avril Wilson (Senior Engagement Specialist)

Apologies: Eoghan O'Sullivan (Community Liaison Officer)

Facilitation: Harriet Emerson

All slide presentations are attached to these minutes and are available on the [Project web page](#).

Welcome & Introductions

Harriet welcomed everyone and thanked them for giving up their time to engage in this Community Forum structure. She explained that she had been appointed as an independent facilitator, external to EirGrid, to ensure the successful operation of the Forum. Given that this was the first meeting of the Community Forum and that not everyone present had been able to attend the previous information evening, she indicated that the meeting would be reviewing the East Meath – North Dublin Grid Upgrade project so that everyone had the same grasp of the focus of the group, before moving on to an explanation of the Community Forum and Community Benefit Fund, and how the consultation on this grid upgrade will work.

Everyone attending then briefly introduced themselves and identified the community group and area that they were representing.

Overview of the Project

Jason Kenna and Christie Elliott (EirGrid Project Management Team) then presented a number of slides that introduced Eirgrid and its specific function and set out the various demands that generate the need for the proposed grid upgrade and its location between the Woodland substation in County Meath and the Belcamp substation in North County Dublin. They explained the [six steps](#) that Eirgrid goes through from identifying the need for development of the electricity grid, through identifying the best way to meet this need, to delivering the necessary work. The East Meath – North Dublin Grid Upgrade project has completed Step 3 which identified the best performing technical option to be a new underground cable from Belcamp to Woodland. Step 4 now involves Eirgrid proposing different route options for the underground cable and researching and consulting with all interested parties to understand where the best route would be. The different assessment criteria that are used to assess all options was presented before a decision is made on the best performing route. The presentation ended with an illustrated explanation of what underground cable and its installation involves.

Members were interested to know whether all the route would be along roads. The EirGrid staff were clear that wherever possible this would be the case but that there may be stretches that may need to cross private land, in this case EirGrid Agriculture Liaison Officers will work with landowners. When the

proposed route options are published, there will be an approximate location for these parts of the routes illustrated on the maps.

There was also a question about whether the changes to more sustainable energy sources in future are likely to make significant grid infrastructure redundant. In response Jason Kenna (Project Manager) indicated that older fossil fuel energy sources are located relatively close to the grid infrastructure and that when they are no longer used the small section linking them to the main grid may become disused. However, the need to move energy from where it is produced around the country will continue and for this reason it is unlikely that any significant sections of the grid would not be used

Community Forum and Community Benefit Fund

Avril Wilson (Senior Engagement Specialist, EirGrid) outlined the purpose of the Community Forum itself, which is to:

- Represent the views of the community and facilitate a 'local voice'.
- Provide guidance and feedback at key stages of the project.
- Assist in resolution of local issues that arise during the project stages.
- Identify local sources of information that will assist the project team in choosing the most deliverable routes with the least impact on communities.
- Communicate information to a wider group of regional and local stakeholders.

She outlined the aim of including representatives from community groups across the project area (1 representative per group) and that there will be three elected councillors -one from Meath County Council and two from Fingal Municipal District; reflecting the spread of the project area across both Councils, as well as a representative from the Chamber of Commerce in each. To participate members must be representing a non-profit organisation within the project area that is registered with the relevant Public Participation Network.

The work of the Community Forum involves:

- Discussion of route development principles;
- Assisting EirGrid in mapping local constraints/hot-spots that EirGrid should try to avoid;
- Reviewing potential routes that EirGrid bring forward;
- Advising EirGrid on its approach to consultation;
- Exploring consultation and engagement opportunities;
- Keeping updated on progress of the consultation.

EirGrid also intends delivering benefits to the communities affected by delivery of the grid upgrade once planning application is successful. At this time a Community Benefit Strategy including community, sustainability and biodiversity streams will be developed and an independent administrator appointed. When work begins on delivering the project, funds will be released in a phased manner for the delivery of this strategy.

In discussion, it was suggested that engagement with farming representatives will be important and that this could possibly be done through their participation in the Community Forum. Avril indicated that non-profit community-based farming organisations could indeed participate if they wished. It was pointed out that EirGrid is engaging with landowners and stakeholders within the project study area. the project. Similarly, the participation of Chambers of Commerce representatives was seen as desirable.

Members asked whether the councillors participating in the Forum would be representing the relevant areas of the local authority affected by the project. The EirGrid staff responded yes that the request went

to corporate services of each Local Authority and specifically sought Councillors from the relevant project area. It is hoped that both the councillors and Chamber of Commerce representatives will be present at the next Community Forum meeting.

Consultation

Ailbhe Farrell (Senior Engagement Specialist, EirGrid) explained that the proposed route options for the underground cable will be published on the 7th September and that this will be the beginning of a 12-week public consultation period. She outlined the different ways in which it will be possible to feed into the consultation; through an online portal, a freepost questionnaire delivered to all homes in the area, through the project email (EastMeathNorthDublin@eirgrid.com) or via conventional post. A range of public engagement initiatives will also take place including webinars, advertising, mobile information units visiting different parts of the project area, open days, as well as engagement with different stakeholder groups.

In discussion, the view was expressed that the correspondence arriving to individual households will motivate responses. In response to a question, it was clarified that the 7th September is the first date that the proposed routes will be made public, but that there will be communications with landowners in areas where the different route options will need to cross private land.

The Community Forum members are asked to share information to their local community groups and the forum may consider making a submission themselves

One member enquired whether the consultation is effectively on fine-tuning the routes and, in response, the EirGrid staff present stressed that the final route chosen might be a mixture of more than one of the proposed routes, might be tweaked and amended, and delivery would be informed as a result of all the consultation inputs received. EirGrid is looking for as much input as possible to help ensure the best performing route can be identified.

Asked whether the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) has been involved in pre-consultations with EirGrid, Jason indicated that initial communications have taken place.

AOB

It was confirmed that a copy of the slides presented during the meeting will be sent out to all Forum members with the meeting minutes and, for transparency, will also be put on the project page on the EirGrid website. No other issues were raised by members for discussion at this point.

Harriet informed the group that the forum will develop a Terms of Reference for the Community Forum to guide its operation and ensure working principles are agreed by all. Harriett will circulate a document for members to consider and discuss at their next meeting. Those present agreed to this and that the item be put on the agenda of the following meeting.

Next meeting

The Forum members agreed to meet again on the evening of the **6th September 2022** to receive a briefing from EirGrid staff on the route proposals which are to be published the following day and an update on consultation activities. This meeting will be online. It was also proposed that the Forum meet again within a few weeks of that date to capture the response and feedback from community groups to the proposals.

It was clarified that the agenda of meetings and participation of EirGrid staff at Community Forum meetings is to be determined by the members. Any member with an suggestions for agenda items, queries or concerns may contact the facilitator via email at harriet@adjust.ie.

Avril also encouraged those present to consider areas that had no representation or to ask other potential community groups to express an interest in joining the forum.

Any further project queries can be sent to the project email eastmeathnorthdublin@eirgrid.com or contact Eoghan O Sullivan O Sullivan 087 247,7732.

Everyone was thanked for their attendance. There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 8.30pm.