

DRAFT

## East Meath – North Dublin Grid Upgrade Community Forum

**7pm, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022, Coolquoy Lodge, Co. Dublin**

**Attending** (members): Helena Merriman (St. Margaret's Parish Hall Committee), Liam O Gradaigh (St. Margaret's GAA), Cllr Damien O'Reilly (Meath Co. Co), Pearse Sutton (St. Margaret's The Ward), Rob Webb (Tyrrelstown Residents Community Council)

**Apologies:** Gerardine Doyle (Craobh Chiarain GAA club), Anne Marie Macken (Scoil Bhríde Parents Assoc., Kilbride), Walter Moran (Dunboyne AFC), Richard Morris (Blackhall GAA Club), Sheelagh Morris (St Margarets Action Committee), Denis O'Leary (Kilbride Tidy Towns), Tom O'Mahony (Dunboyne Community Centre)

**Attending** (EirGrid): Ailbhe Farrell (Senior Engagement Specialist), Jason Kenna (Project Management Office), Eoghan O'Sullivan (Community Liaison Officer)

*Apologies:* Christie Elliott (Project Management Office),

**Facilitation:** Harriet Emerson

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### **Welcome & Agenda**

All those present were welcomed and thanked for attending. It was agreed to proceed with the draft agenda as pre-circulated.

### **Minutes of Meeting 6th October 2022**

The Draft minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated to all Forum members. It was noted that, following feedback from those present, clarification has been included on the reference to the MSD plant (under "Other Preoccupations") and under AOB the request by members for copies of the maps used at the meeting was added. Accepting these changes, the minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting.

### **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

No matters were identified as arising that were not already on the agenda.

### **Initial response from EirGrid staff to the points gathered at Community Forum meeting of 17th October on the 4 proposed routes for the Grid Upgrade.**

The feedback from EirGrid and discussion was taken in two parts (see below) reflecting inputs from the Forum's last meeting.

### **Public engagement**

Ailbhe thanked the Forum for the valuable feedback provided following its last meeting. She shared information (attached) addressing queries raised about the public consultation on the grid upgrade through weeks 1-5. This provided an overview of EirGrid's media plan which has tried to use all forms and channels available to reach the most people in the project area.

Social media (both paid & organic/unpaid uptake): Including posts/ boosted posts and advertising the reach to around 400,000 and the click through rate is good compared to similar projects. The messaging and look of social media campaign will change in the last 4 weeks and be focused on directing people to the website.

Leaflet drop: The leaflet drop was directed to over 12,000 residences within the study area corresponding to Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) data.

Display (digital): General digital advertising to raise awareness has generated around 400,000 impressions.

Traditional Press: This has been targeted with paid advertising but there has also been organic coverage of the proposal and different route options.

Search optimisation: A wide range of key words (longer than the sample given) has been used on a geo-targeted basis and this has resulted in an 11% click-through rate which is significantly higher than the 8% average.

Digital and audio radio: Spotify, M104, 95.8LMFM and as many other similar channels as possible have been targeted.

EirGrid team outreach: Open days, information unit visits, webinars, direct contact and conversations with liaison staff have been positive with increasing numbers engaging. Eoghan reported that good numbers attended at Sweeneys, with generally positive feedback on EirGrid's approach to engagement and openness to speak with people.

Eoghan indicated that all the proposed routes being underground is likely to reduce the strength of reaction and engagement from communities as this is generally viewed as less intrusive or potentially problematic compared to overground pylons. The impact of the energy crisis may also be increasing awareness of the need for such infrastructure upgrades.

The majority of inputs and conversations have concerned the village of Kilbride, challenges for commuters, school runs, and the impact of the infrastructure installation around MSD and the solar farms.

Ailbhe highlighted the remaining key consultation events and shared a number of useful website links. She indicated that EirGrid staff will circulate posts and information to Forum members for dissemination to their groups ahead of these. It was requested that copies of graphics be supplied in JPG format to make them easier to share.

Some Forum members reported that they had still not seen either paid or organic coverage on social media hitting the community noticeboards they are involved with and EirGrid agreed to look into this.

Forum members recommended that a large physical sign should be put up outside the venue alerting the community to the forthcoming event at St. Margaret's GAA (and others) and it was agreed that EirGrid will supply this in laminated form.

There was recognition from members that EirGrid have worked hard across all media in the project area to raise awareness and encourage communities to engage in the consultation but also that it is inevitable that there will be some who will not be aware of the project. It was also noted that negative reactions may be received as a result of negative experiences with other and neighbouring projects.

### **Project-related Issues**

Jason reiterated EirGrid's appreciation of the high level of detail in the inputs received from the Forum which are very helpful. This type of local knowledge is important and most welcome. He explained that the Forum's inputs have been forwarded to the EirGrid design team and will be input into the route assessment process that ultimately leads to the final route selection. This process includes consideration of technical, economic, environmental, socio-economic and deliverability

issues. He explained that “bubble” areas on route options reflect areas that are subject to constraints under one or more of these categories.

**County Development Plans** were raised by Forum members as including proposals for future development of road infrastructure and housing which both pose potential limitations and opportunities for delivery of the upgrade. Jason indicated that EirGrid is meeting with both Meath and Fingal Councils to discuss County Development and Local Area Plans as well as meeting other stakeholders involved in delivery of large infrastructure projects, so that these proposed developments can be considered in route selection and execution. Where there are road developments proposed they will discuss timelines to see if there is an opportunity to combine delivery, bearing in mind that project completion is required by 2030 for EirGrid.

**Roundabouts** and sharp (90’) turns in the route represent pinch points for road users and for laying cables where it is hard to manoeuvre and allowance must be made for the wider radius of a “slow bend” needed for the cables to bend around the corner.

On average, crews can complete **laying ducting** cables along 50 metre stretches in a day; from when the crews arrive on a stretch of road to its reinstatement. After advance notice to all households and enterprises affected, the process involves initial installation of traffic management schemes, then the excavation of the road, laying of the ducting and reinstatement of the road. Steel plates will be placed across the excavated trench to maintain access to entranceways while work is being carried out. There is a video on the EirGrid website that illustrates this process

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8iSJGEAsUQ>.

Initially 3 parallel empty ducts are laid containing high tensile ropes/ wires. The cable comes in lengths of between 750m and 850m and there are **jointing bays** along the route at approximately these intervals. The cables are pulled through the ducts using the ropes and then joined, after which the bays are completely covered and the road fully reinstated. The locations of the jointing bays are all geotagged so that they can be excavated should this ever be needed in future. All works are subject to road opening licences which will indicate when works may be carried out in order to limit disruption, the finish of the reinstated road, and so on.

Jason explained that there are no difficulties in underground cables crossing underneath high voltage **overhead power lines**, except during construction. Cables can be laid near one another as long as they are an appropriate distance apart so that currents moving at different rates do not interfere with each other.

There was some discussion about how EirGrid accurately identifies where **existing services** are located, specifically given historical shortcomings in record-keeping and the risk of information not being updated in a timely manner after recent development. Examples were given of the Hollystown roundabout; dug up six times in the past year for the installation of cabling and pipework, and a similar situation in Kilbride. Jason explained that all service providers (technical stakeholders) are asked to provide detailed information on nature and location of their infrastructure in the area and EirGrid continues to maintain contact with them about this. He acknowledged that there may be mapping errors. In recognition of this, EirGrid carries out site investigations, using slit trenches to identify exactly what IS present along a proposed route. In addition, they use Lidar and Ground Penetrating Radar to support these investigations and have Agricultural Liaison Officers on the ground. EirGrid has also reached out to the solar farm operators for information and this contact will continue until the planning application is submitted.

While acknowledging that EirGrid appears to be doing all that it can, Forum members indicated concerns that once the work of delivering the project is outsourced, problems may still arise that disrupt best laid plans. Jason responded that EirGrid hopes such concerns will be voiced to its Community Liaison Officers and Agricultural Liaison Officers so that they can be addressed.

However, he stressed that EirGrid is learning consistently from projects about how to best deliver the process of taking projects from initial concept to delivery.

It was clarified that the width of roadway required to accommodate the 3 cables (3 phase power) laid is approximately 1.7m at narrowest, as the cables need to be separated from one another by approximately 300mm to allow for cooling and to avoid interference. Where the cables must be laid deeper in the ground, for example where they must go under another service, heat retention is greater and width may extend to 2.1 m. Clearly, it is vital that installing the cables does not undermine the structure of the road themselves, risking damage to the road and the services beneath.

### **Identification of additional issues**

EirGrid staff were informed that Tyrrelstown Community Centre will be relocating to Hollystown Golf Club for a period of possibly 8 to 12 months, probably later in 2023 while structural repair works are undertaken. Jason responded to this that it is unlikely that work would commence on the final route until late in 2025. However, it is good to know this type of information for the site investigation phase. If there are significant changes like this (temporary or otherwise) or planned activities (like festivals) it would be very helpful to be informed of these.

### **Community Forum response to the public consultation**

In discussion, Forum members indicated that their individual groups would be making individual submissions on the consultation. Given that the feedback already passed to EirGrid will be considered in assessment of route options, it was not felt that the Forum needed to make any further formal submission during the consultation.

### **Any other business**

It is hoped that other groups from the Western end of the project area that have been involved in adjacent EirGrid projects may consider joining to input views on the route options in that area. Appreciation was expressed for the efforts made by Forum members to encourage greater participation from community groups.

### **Next meeting**

It was agreed that the Forum should meet again after the Open Days (26th Oct. at St. Margaret's GAA & 27th Oct. in Batterstown) and the two information days on the 15th and 16th November, but before the close of the public consultation at the end of November. Harriet will send out a Survey Monkey to all members to identify the date that suits most people. It was felt that the next meeting should be online to facilitate those members who may find travel, or time to travel, to meetings difficult. EirGrid staff will be present to respond to issues raised by members.

As there was no further business, everyone was thanked for their attendance and the meeting ended at 8.15pm.