



Stakeholder Engagement
Plan 2020



The current. The future.

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1. An enhanced approach to engagement

This document summarises EirGrid’s draft plans for stakeholder engagement from 2020 onwards. We believe that working together with all stakeholders – customers and industry, the public and local communities – will lead to better outcomes that reflect all views.

This belief helped shape our overall strategy for 2020-25, where stakeholder engagement has now been identified as one of our key supporting goals. Effective engagement will be essential if EirGrid is to achieve our primary purpose – to transform the power system for future generations.

EirGrid has been tasked to lead the changes in the electricity system that are necessary to respond to climate change. In particular we will have to achieve a level of 70% renewably-generated electricity on the grid by 2030. This will require a level of change that hasn’t been attempted since the roll-out of rural electrification.

If we are to achieve this, we will need to work together in partnership and with the support of all our stakeholders. For that reason, engagement with these audiences is more important than ever before. This year marks the start of a process of continuous improvement of our engagement activities to meet the challenges of the next decade.

As a first step, our website now lists our planned stakeholder engagements for 2020. This details the purpose of each engagement, the stakeholder groups we need to hear from, and how to get involved. We hope this will encourage more stakeholders to take part. It will also allow us to start tracking response levels to assess the effectiveness of our new initiatives. We can then identify where an engagement process was less effective than hoped and learn lessons from this.

How you can help shape our engagement plans

As a further step towards adopting our 2020 engagement plan, we are publishing it for consultation. We hope this will allow our stakeholders to provide constructive feedback, and so make for a final plan that is comprehensive, inclusive and transparent.

We want to learn from stakeholders about ways we could make our engagement even more effective and more accountable. We particularly want to hear from those with positive experiences of stakeholder engagement from other organisations and in other jurisdictions. As part of our enhanced approach to engagement, we will seek out best-practice ideas, and we welcome suggestions on this. In response to your feedback, we will then develop and refine this plan, and identify the lessons learned in this consultation process.

Engage for better outcomes for all

Our 2020-25 strategy saw a commitment to seek innovative new ways to engage. Our aim is to achieve world-class standards, and to deliver better results as a consequence. To achieve the scale of transformation required by climate change will require significant increases in the scope and frequency of our stakeholder engagement.

We will need to engage with industry to ensure appropriate integration of renewable generation, interconnection and relevant services to support the requirements of operation of the grid to successfully meet our renewables targets. We will need to engage with landowners and their communities to ensure we earn their informed consent to host the next generation of grid infrastructure. And we will need to engage with the Government and regulator to ensure we meet the required target as cost-effectively and efficiently as possible.

This document sets out how we plan to do this – and seeks feedback from all stakeholders to improve our plans.

What success looks like

Success is making informed decisions utilising all available insights. We want to ensure that those who are affected by our activities are afforded the opportunity to ‘Have Their Say’, to input into the process and also to understand how their contributions have been taken on board, resulting in better outcomes for all. We will continue to build on lessons learned from our engagements.

2. Who we are and what we do

Overview

We operate and develop the electricity system, the wholesale market, and interconnection with our neighbours. We are a state-owned company, so we work to meet the needs of all electricity users, rather than to pursue our own commercial interests. We are an independent entity, with no vested interest in the generation or selling of electricity. We don't own the grid infrastructure, and so have no self-interest in adding to it. We ensure that electricity is always available when and where it's needed, every second of every day and for decades to come. We do this in the most cost-effective way possible, in the interests of all electricity users.

Our role

We develop, manage and operate the transmission grid and electricity market in Ireland. The grid transports power from where it is generated to where it is needed. It brings power to industry and businesses that use large amounts of electricity. The grid also powers the distribution network: this supplies the electricity used every day in homes, businesses, schools, hospitals, and farms. We balance supply and demand every minute of the day, while also planning for Ireland's long-term electricity needs.

Our services include the Single Electricity Market Operator (SEMO). This wholesale market for power runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This ensures electricity users always have reliable power at a competitive price.

EirGrid also develops and operates interconnections with neighbouring grids, such as with National Grid via the East West Interconnector. Other proposed interconnections include the North South and Celtic Interconnectors. We also enable interconnections developed and operated by third parties, such as the proposed Greenlink project.

We implement government and EU policy in Ireland. We act independently and in the public interest. We are regulated as a monopoly service provider. We perform our services for the benefit of every electricity user, and to support the economy.

The context in which we work

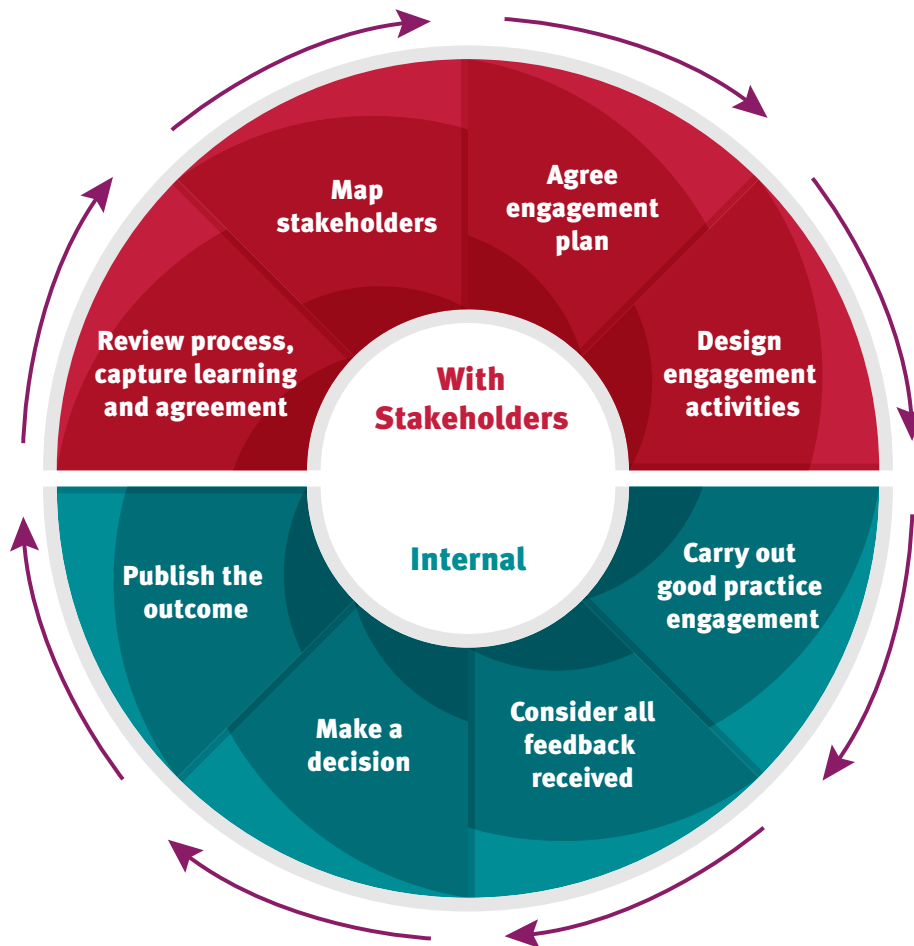
Delivering energy to consumers in Ireland requires us to operate within a complex environment. We actively engage with policy, industry and society at all levels, from local to European, in line with our strategic objectives. However, as stated above, we are also a regulated business, and our engagement takes place within a regulatory environment which we must have regard to. Our engagement strategy provides the principles and tools to ensure that, whether we are talking to our customers or local communities, we are clear about our regulatory obligations and our objectives.



3. Our engagement principles

In 2014, we carried out a root and branch review of our approach to consultation. This was informed by external stakeholder feedback from industry, community groups and wider stakeholders, and formed the basis of our 2016 engagement strategy. The strategy describes both the principles we will adhere to, and the steps we will take to ensure all our engagement meets the expectations of our stakeholders.

Regardless of whether we are considering a new grid project, a response to a specific policy, or holding a forum to hear from our customers we take the same strategic approach to designing engagement.



In practice this means that:

- We will communicate clearly with stakeholders, including plain English summaries of proposals and other relevant documents.
- We will allow enough time for stakeholders to consider the information we have given – and to give us their views.
- Anybody who wishes to respond will be able to do so.
- We will offer clear opportunities to engage with us.
- We will explain the decisions we need to make – and the timelines.
- We will communicate with all stakeholders who have taken the time to engage with us. We will explain how their feedback shaped our eventual decision or approach.

These principles are applied to our engagement with all our stakeholders and form the basis of all engagement with industry, customers and members of the public.

4. Why we engage – The objectives

EirGrid is committed to stakeholder and public engagement - when we work together with stakeholders, customers and industry, the public and local community, we make better decisions across the organisation to ensure delivery of our strategic objective of engaging for better outcomes for all

The recently published Government of Ireland “Action Plan 2019 to Tackle Climate Breakdown” requires that by 2030, 70% of Ireland’s electricity needs shall be met by renewables. Given this ambition, it is recognised that transformative change is required across the electricity sector.

We are committed to operating, developing and enhancing the grid and leading the electricity sector on sustainability and decarbonisation. The foundation of achieving this ambition will be ongoing engagement with all stakeholders with the objective of better outcomes for all.

Engaging with customers & industry

EirGrid aims to deliver quality services to customers and other industry stakeholders. We respond to a wide range of needs across the wholesale energy sector across Ireland.

Some customers generate electricity, from conventional or renewable sources. Other customers have a high demand for electricity, which only our grid can provide. Interconnector customers provide interconnection to other electricity systems. We also serve the suppliers and stakeholders with an interest in the operation and enhancement of the transmission system.

We recognise that our customers are the key enablers to meeting 70% of Ireland’s electricity needs from renewables by 2030. They will provide the generation, the interconnection and supply the necessary services to operate the system with high penetration of renewable generation.

Engagement with both customers and other industry stakeholders is important for us to shape how we continue to meet the evolving needs of our customers, as well as future development of how we plan, develop and operate the transmission system.

We recognise that much of our focus on new engagement practices since 2016 has been on landowners and communities. In the next five years, we aim to apply the lessons learned from these practices to our engagement with industry and with customers.

Engaging with landowners and communities

Asking landowners and local communities to accept new infrastructure has never been an easy task. We never take these decisions lightly, or without first investigating all alternative solutions. But where new infrastructure is essential, we need to inform and persuade landowners and communities.

In recent years, we transformed our public and stakeholder engagement. We use a consistent, six-step public engagement process to explore options and make decisions. This means we follow the same steps for every project. The decision-making tools we use, and the amount of engagement we carry out at each step, depends on the scale and complexity of each project.

And we are committed to further improvements where required. We will articulate our goal of transforming the power system for future generations in a compelling way. We will also continue to look for innovative new ways to engage. Our aim is to achieve world-class standards, and to deliver better results as a consequence. Our goal is to deepen and broaden our consultation, and to respond in meaningful and persuasive ways to fears and concerns.

5. Who our stakeholders are

One of our key goals for 2020 is to focus on developing our understanding of our stakeholders. We intend to update our stakeholder mapping, and to review the ways in which we engage with each group. This is with the intention of developing a more tailored approach to engagement for different stakeholder groups.

How we identify our stakeholders

All of our work affects people and organisations – whether planning, developing or operating the grid. This section explains which stakeholders we may consult with and when.

The process

We start by asking ourselves the following questions:

- Why is this needed? Before we engage with stakeholders, we ensure that the reasons for the engagement are clear, such as why this particular grid development is required or why a change to how we operate the grid is required.
- Who might this affect? For example, communities affected by grid development, or customers affected by changes to the operating environment.
- Who may have a particular interest in it?
- What decisions do we need to make? When and how could the stakeholders we talk to influence these decisions?
- What are the best ways to involve stakeholders who we may affect, or groups with an interest in a relevant project/piece of work/issue?

Typically, our stakeholders include:

Customers

Our customers are those directly connected to the transmission system, either generating or consuming large amounts of energy or providing services necessary for operating the transmission system.

However, we work for the benefit and safety of every person in Ireland. This means the grid supplies power to industry and businesses, and to the distribution network – that supplies the electricity used every day in homes, businesses, schools, hospitals and farms.

Landowners and Communities

When we consider grid development, we consult with local landowners and local communities that may be affected.

This can include:

- individual landowners, or companies that own the land;
- members of local communities, businesses and groups; and
- local authorities and elected representatives.

The scale and pace of changes to the power system required to achieve the targets in the Climate Action Plan will need a proportionate increase in our engagement with landowners and communities. Learning how best to scale and optimise our engagement with these audiences is a key priority for our engagement planning.

Other Organisations

We also talk to businesses, representative organisations and political authorities at all levels. This helps us to get the opinions of those with a specific interest in our plans, or on a particular issue. It also ensures that we are engaging on the policy that affects our operations, and therefore our customers.

We engage with organisations from many sectors, by talking to groups interested in issues like the environment, tourism and heritage. We also talk to relevant government departments when needed.

Stakeholder list

We engage with a wide range of stakeholders, and for each policy, project or challenge we review the list of relevant stakeholders to ensure we have a comprehensive list and identify any gaps.

Some of the stakeholders we engage with most frequently are listed in the table below. As each engagement has a different audience there is no single prioritisation and the ordering of the list below does not imply importance.

Stakeholder group	Examples of stakeholders
Academics	Universities, ESRI
Chartered Institutions	Engineers Ireland
Landowners, communities and their representatives	Communities with major infrastructure projects, planning authorities
Customers	Generators, interconnectors, large energy users, energy suppliers, demand-side aggregators
Energy Industry	ESB Networks, Gas Networks Ireland, Electricity Association of Ireland, Irish Wind Energy Association (IWEA), Demand Response Aggregators of Ireland (DRAI), NOW Ireland, Microgeneration Ireland, Irish Wind Farmers' Association (IWFA), Irish Solar Energy Association (ISEA), Irish Energy Storage Association (IESA), Renewable Energy Ireland
Environment	National Parks and Wildlife Service
Government Advisory Boards	Climate Change Advisory Council, National Competitiveness Council, NESCC, ESRI, Heritage council
Industry Bodies	IDA, IBEC, American Chamber, Chambers Ireland, French Chamber, British-Irish Chambers
Infrastructure	Irish Rail, Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Media	Consumer, Trade, Financial, Broadcasters
NGO	Friends of the Earth, IFA, Failte Ireland, Irish Rural Link
Non-Political – Europe	ENTSO-E, RGI, European Investment Bank
Political	Taoiseach, Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Oireachtas committees
Political – Europe	European Commission, European Parliament, French Government
Regulatory	CRU, SEM Committee
Think Tanks	IIEA, EPC, University College Dublin

6. Looking forward

We are proud of the progress we have made in our stakeholder engagement to date, such as the root and branch review of our approach to consultation to ensure all engagement is appropriately tailored and comprehensive. Despite this, consultation tools and approaches are constantly evolving as are stakeholders' expectations. Our stakeholder engagement is geared towards understanding and responding to concerns, highlighting impacts and opportunities we were not previously aware of, and ensuring we deliver the best possible service with the least disruption.

This applies to all of our stakeholder engagements, from industry and customers through to local communities and public affected by a development proposal. We have received feedback from stakeholders around transparency, our engagement process, the identification of clear objectives, evaluating our engagement and ensuring internal sharing on information and awareness of stakeholder engagement at all levels. Below we have highlighted some of the initiatives we are working on this year to address the feedback and enhance our engagement with all stakeholders.

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

We have taken on board the feedback received about engaging with our stakeholders to shape our plans. As a first step towards adopting our 2020 engagement plan, we are publishing this document for consultation. We hope this will allow our stakeholders to provide constructive feedback, and so make for a final plan that is comprehensive, inclusive and transparent.

Continuous Improvement

To ensure that our engagement is as effective as possible, it is vital that clear objectives are set, and sufficient data is collected to measure progress and impact against these objectives. We are working to make the setting of objectives and measures for our engagement activities part of our day to day practice. In the future we will also look to benchmark our engagement against examples of best practice from other countries.

Tailoring our engagement to our stakeholders' needs

We will continue to work with a wide range of stakeholders. We understand that they have different needs, which require tailored modes of engagement. This year, we will focus on developing our understanding of our stakeholders: updating our stakeholder mapping and reviewing the ways in which we engage with each group.

Transparency

We have made clear commitments to publishing the outcomes and rationale for all our engagement and going forward we will focus on ensuring that reports, key decisions and relevant stakeholder information are published in a timely manner.

Improving the engagement process for customers/industry

We are proud of our six-step approach to grid development, ensuring that we engage with key stakeholders at the earliest opportunity. In 2020, we will formalise a similar process and structure for our engagement with customers and industry.

Formalising stakeholder engagement across the organisation

A culture of engagement has been embedded in EirGrid in recent times. However, we acknowledge a need to formalise and further integrate a culture of sharing feedback from consultations across the organisation at all levels. We will continue to keep our Board updated and 'bought in' on the success of our engagement against agreed objectives on an annual basis.

7. How we engage with stakeholders

Engagement spectrum

Across our work, stakeholders will have opportunities to influence our decisions in different ways. Sometimes we have regulatory or other requirements which mean there is less scope for influence. In other cases, we are able to collaborate with our stakeholders to come up with a solution together. The engagement spectrum (below – with examples in italics) is a tool commonly used to categorise the different approaches. It enables us to understand how a decision can be influenced and select methods to make sure our stakeholders can best be involved. It's important that we are clear with our stakeholders about the level of influence that is possible on any particular topic to ensure we have a shared understanding of the purpose of our engagement.



Inform

E.G. Notifications of progress/updates



Consult

E.G. Formal Consultation



Involve

E.G. Reference Group and Industry Workshops



Collaborate

E.G. Design Workshops and Industry Advisory Councils



Engagement tools

In 2016, we developed our engagement toolkit, mapping out the different types of engagement methods at our disposal, with a particular focus on grid development. This has now been updated to reflect the engagement tools for our customers and industry as well.

The toolkit is intended to help decide what kind of engagement best suits a specific situation, rather than a checklist of activities to be completed. We refresh the toolkit regularly to ensure that we identify opportunities to innovate and apply best practice from other sectors and countries.

How?	Why?	Who?
Bilateral meetings	Inform and consult	Customer/industry & grid development
Blogs, podcasts, and vlogs	Inform and/or consult	Grid development
Consultation	Consult	Customer/industry & grid development
Discussion packs	Consult	Customer/industry & grid development
Drop in sessions	Inform and consult	Customer/industry & grid development
Focus groups	Consult	Grid development
Forum	Consult and involve	Customer/industry & grid development
Independent mediation	Collaborate	Customer/industry & grid development
Interviews	Consult	Customer/industry & grid development
Newsletters	Inform	Customer/industry & grid development
Notification updates	Inform	Customer/industry & grid development
Outreach processes	Inform and consult	Grid development
Participatory Mapping workshop	Inform and consult	Grid development
Public meetings	Inform	Grid development
Reference group	Consult and involve	Customer/industry & grid development
Site visits	Inform	Customer/industry & grid development
Social media and digital tools	Inform and/or consult	Customer/industry & grid development
Surveys and questionnaires	Inform EirGrid	Customer/industry
Webinars	Inform and/or consult	Customer/industry & grid development
Workshops	Involve and/or collaborate	Customer/industry

8. 2020 Stakeholder Engagements

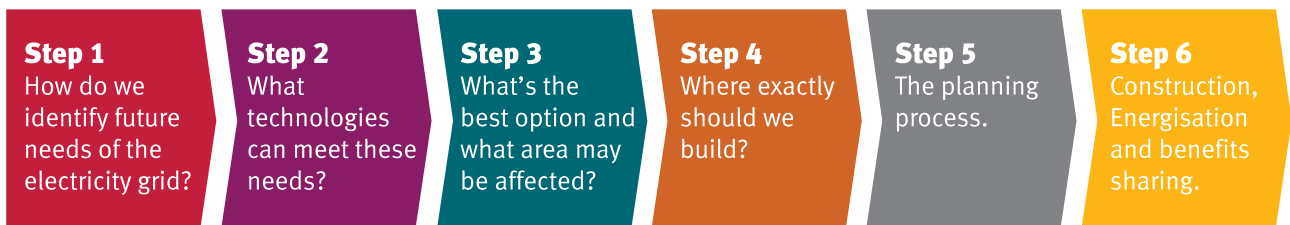
A plan of our specific engagements for 2020 outlining the topic of engagement, key stakeholders, timing and the objective of the engagement, is available on our website [here](#). We also participate in a number of other Industry hosted Fora, Working Groups and Conferences.

Other Customer and Industry Engagement

In addition to the Stakeholder Engagements referenced above which are now published on our website, there is significant ongoing bilateral engagement with key Government, regulatory and a number of industry partners including ESBN, GNI, DCCA, DHPLG, CRU, SEAI, IDA, community groups and Industry Representative Bodies as well as ongoing bilateral engagement with individual customers to address customer needs.

Our Engagement on Grid Development Projects

When we are developing new grid infrastructure, our engagement principles (outlined on page 3) are



applied to form our six-step engagement process. It ensures we are identifying stakeholders and giving them an opportunity to shape the proposals as early as possible.

In 2020 we will continue to engage on a number of projects as they progress through the six step process. These projects are listed on our website [here](#).





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