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Responding to  
Equine Concerns



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# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	1
1. Introduction	3
2. Landowner engagement: EirGrid's approach to date	5
3. The Irish Equine Industry	8
4. Issues raised with respect to equine	10
5. Response to the issues raised	12
6. Commitments	18
7. Implementation	20
<b>Appendices</b>	21

# Executive Summary

In January 2014, EirGrid gave a commitment to comprehensively address issues of concern to the equine sector. This work was carried out as part of the Grid25 Initiatives that were announced in response to issues that were raised during consultations on major projects. We are aware of the importance of the equine sector to the Irish economy, and understand the concerns that this sector has raised in relation to the routing of power lines.

EirGrid, in its role as the state-owned operator and developer of the national grid, recognises the role played by landowners, including those operating equine enterprises. We look forward to their continuing support as we seek to deliver the network necessary to help secure Ireland's energy needs now, and for future generations.

The equine sector contributes in excess of €1billion annually to the Irish economy and sustains up to 16,000 jobs.<sup>1</sup> In developing the national grid we are committed to doing our utmost to minimise any impact on any equine enterprises. In that regard we welcome all of the submissions received relating to equine matters. This report provided an opportunity to review our practices and address the concerns raised.

In order to comprehensively consider the concerns of the equine sector, we carried out a full review of the submissions we received which related to equine issues. We also investigated international practice and research relating to power lines and the equine sector.

Following this review, we have identified three key themes where significant improvements can be made to the way we develop the electricity transmission network and how we can work better with key equine stakeholders to ensure their interests are considered in a more substantive and meaningful way from the outset.

The 3 key themes are as follows:

- Provide Greater Recognition
- Initiate Increased Engagement
- Develop a Package of Measures

From the feedback we received, it is clear that stakeholders from the equine sector believed that there was a lack of recognition for their sector in EirGrid's consultative process. It was felt that EirGrid's engagement was inadequate, and lacked information on what was being proposed. They felt EirGrid failed to listen to or understand their concerns, and failed to develop a package of measures to address these concerns.

We have looked into these criticisms, and have developed commitments to address these concerns which are set out below.

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<sup>1</sup> Horse Racing Ireland

## Theme 1 – Provide Greater Recognition

### **Landowner Charter**

EirGrid, with the assistance of key stakeholders, will develop a Landowner Charter. This Charter will clearly outline the level of professionalism and the response time by which landowners can expect to have their queries answered.

It is important to note that there are existing codes of practice that apply to the relationships between landowners and the development of the electricity network. EirGrid's Landowner Charter will build on the success of these codes.

## Theme 2 – Initiate Increased Engagement

### **Process for Consultation in Project Development**

In line with the commitments made within our report 'Reviewing and Improving Our Public Consultation Process',<sup>2</sup> we will improve the effectiveness of our consultation process to clearly define consultation opportunities, to explain how feedback can be provided and to efficiently assess feedback received.

EirGrid is committed to specific improvements in our approach to consultation that reflect the importance of landowners and the wider community to the development of the transmission network.

### **Agricultural Liaison Officers**

EirGrid will appoint Agricultural Liaison Officers. The liaison officers will be located regionally and will liaise with landowners on all agricultural and equine matters.

### **Landowner's Handbook**

EirGrid will develop a Landowner's Handbook, which will contain a full suite of information and provide clarity as is necessary to landowners, farmers and owners of equine enterprises to address the issues raised during consultation.

## Theme 3 – Develop a Package of Measures

EirGrid will work to develop a package of measures to address the practical concerns for landowners and farmers resulting from the construction of electricity transmission infrastructure on their land. These include measures to minimise impact on the land and the enterprise and will include clarity around compensation.

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<sup>2</sup> Report available at [www.eirgrid.com](http://www.eirgrid.com)

Taking the above as a set of proposed recommendations, we welcome input from equine sector stakeholders to help shape this new approach. We want to agree an approach to the equine sector that enables EirGrid to develop the electricity transmission infrastructure necessary for this country's economic progress.

EirGrid is committed to working constructively with all landowners, including owners of equine enterprises. This section of our community has always played a key role in the development and successful operation of the electricity transmission system, and they will continue to do so.

# 1. Introduction

This report is EirGrid's response to the commitment made in January 2014 to comprehensively address the major issues arising with regard to equine matters from the submissions received through consultations on major projects.

Some of the submissions received raised concerns about the impact our projects could have on the equine sector. In producing this report EirGrid has reviewed all of these submissions received and issues raised. To enable the issues to be addressed in a comprehensive manner, a number of expert reports have been commissioned - including a survey of practice among other European transmission system operators (TSOs). All reports are included in the appendices and referenced in the document where appropriate.

Both EirGrid and ESB Networks play important roles in the transmission system and it is worth setting out the respective roles of EirGrid and ESB Networks in order to understand the different responsibilities and how we work together.

EirGrid plc is a state-owned commercial company with full responsibility for the Transmission System Operator (TSO) and Market Operator (MO) functions. EirGrid's role is to operate and ensure the maintenance of and, if necessary, develop a safe, secure, reliable, economical, and efficient electricity transmission system and to explore and develop opportunities for interconnection of its system with other systems, in all cases with a view to ensuring that all reasonable demands for electricity are met and having due regard for the environment. EirGrid is also tasked with implementing aspects of Government energy policy.

ESB Networks is the licensed Transmission Asset Owner (TAO), with responsibility for the management of capital work programmes related to transmission. This includes the construction of new high voltage substations, and their associated overhead lines and underground cables. Their responsibility also involves responding to network faults and carrying out planned maintenance and refurbishment on these assets.

Where stakeholders raised issues pertaining to construction and maintenance activities, we sought the input of ESB Networks for this report.

A number of submissions related to quite specific equine matters for individual stakeholders, and these are being responded to directly with the individuals concerned.

To address concerns in relation to noise from overhead lines, we have commissioned a survey to measure noise. This will require measurements over a prolonged time period in different weather conditions under one of our 400kV lines. This research has commenced, but at time of going to print, the study has not been completed. The findings from this survey will be published in due course.

The report contains a number of key recommendations: We hope that when these are implemented, they will address the concerns expressed in the submissions we received. In addition to this report on the concerns of the equine sector, we have also produced a report that specifically deals with our consultation process when developing new transmission lines. Our consultation report titled *“Reviewing and Improving our Public Consultation Process”* addresses concerns expressed by many, including landowners and farmers, on how EirGrid engages with stakeholders during project development. The report is published on the EirGrid website.<sup>3</sup>

EirGrid recognises the value and important role of the equine sector to the Irish economy. We see this report as the start of a dialogue with this industry to help shape an approach to the equine sector that can enable the continuing development of our electricity transmission infrastructure. This is essential to this country’s economic progress, and we are committed to working with owners of equine enterprises to achieve this goal.

It should be noted that in the context of this report, equine enterprises refer to stud farms, racehorse training facilities, livery yards and all other locations where all regular significant equine related activities occur.

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<sup>3</sup> Report available at [www.eirgrid.com](http://www.eirgrid.com)



## 2. Landowner engagement: EirGrid's approach to date

For new transmission developments, EirGrid is responsible for all engagement with landowners<sup>4</sup> and farmers during the pre-planning stage. During the construction stage, EirGrid is also responsible for the landowner relationship and together with ESB Networks, who are responsible for construction, we work to deliver infrastructure with the least impact to the landowner. At the time of writing we are working on a new project development framework and therefore the description below reflects the approach to date.

Our consultation process commences when we define a study area where new transmission lines are needed, and identify any potential constraints that are specific to this area.

### What are constraints?

In the development of EirGrid's transmission projects a 'constraint' is something that limits or restricts where infrastructure can be built.

There are many different kinds of constraint. They can be physical, such as the presence of a large town or an airfield, or geographic, such as a wide river or a steep slope. There are also locations that are protected in law, like Special Areas of Conservation or UNESCO heritage sites.

During the early stages of a project we work to identify potential constraints. This is based on site visits, desktop studies and feedback from the relevant local authorities and statutory bodies, various stakeholders and, through consultation, members of the public.

Not all constraints are treated the same. Cities and towns, for example, are classified as primary constraints. National parks and locations that are protected for environmental reasons are also primary constraints. We do our utmost to avoid locating infrastructure where it could impact on a primary constraint.

Following this, we can identify potential route corridors and then select the least constrained corridor. At this point, we have an indicative route for the transmission line, and so we now consult directly with landowners.

Landowners are identified in the first instance from a search of the Property Registration Authority of Ireland (PRAI) database of registered lands. This returns the name and address of the current registered owner of the lands. Based on this, the PRAI map outlining the lands is retrieved. This becomes the basis for the generation of landowner mapping for the project, as it shows the extent and boundaries of the land registered to a landowner.

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<sup>4</sup> The term "landowner" in this context refers to the owner(s) of land, over which the proposed line route crosses, regardless of the activity that takes place on that land.

On completion of this task for the entire line route, we prepare a pack for each individual landowner whose lands are crossed by the indicative line route. The pack contains a map that shows the route of the indicative line across the individual's land. This line, drawn on the basis of the information gathered up to this point, represents the line that has the least impact across all of the constraints previously identified.

This pack is either posted or hand delivered to each landowner and a meeting organised to discuss the proposals. This meeting begins the process of landowner engagement. This lasts through the pre-planning stage and right through the construction phase. At this first meeting, we confirm land ownership details, and we then outline the details of what is proposed for the individual's lands. This is generally done by walking the lands with the landowner to show the proposed route. This provides the landowner the opportunity to raise any initial concerns and make practical suggestions. Landowner responses vary greatly at this point: Some question the alignment, or outline how it would impact on their land. Others propose alternative alignments, and indicate where the siting of pylons would be most or least favourable with respect to the activities they undertake on their land.

We recognise that equine enterprises are businesses - and that it is important to minimise any impact to the business. These initial meetings also offer landowners and business owners the chance to tell us about any local constraints or restrictions that we may not be aware of, but that could impact on the route of the line.

At the end of this first meeting with the landowner, we consider all suggestions made about the alignment of the line, in the context of the overall route. Where possible, we facilitate suggestions of alternative alignments. However, we will only do so when this change does not cause an unduly adverse affect to another landowner, resident or to a previously identified environmental constraint. As soon as a decision has been reached with regard to the proposed changes, we contact the landowner to inform them of the decision, and to explain whether the change was possible or not.

On completion of the route's path, the next task is to progress the design of the line. In this task, we identify locations for supporting structures such as steel towers or pylons. The location of towers is driven by technical requirements. Specifically, we must achieve a minimum ground clearance for the conductor, based on the tower design chosen for the individual project. However, during this process we also facilitate requests from landowners to change tower locations, if they have concerns about obstruction or disruption. These requests will, however, always be bound by technical limitations. A common request from landowners is to place towers on or close to hedgerows to minimise the impact on fields. EirGrid can do this where technically possible, but we require the co-operation of the landowner and access to the land to carry out walkover environmental surveys.



The next step is to issue a map of the revised line route showing structure locations to each landowner, and to seek their comments. Again, all landowner requests are considered and implemented where possible.

Impact on equine enterprises is considered in the Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Report that is prepared and lodged with the planning application. Throughout the process, landowner representatives locally are briefed on the project. On lodgement of the planning application, landowners are issued with a map showing the line route and structure locations on their land as submitted for planning.

After planning permission is granted for a new transmission line and prior to construction, EirGrid and ESB Networks will meet to discuss and agree details of the construction phase. Prior to construction, wayleave notices are served on all landowners and EirGrid will meet with these landowners to discuss the construction programme, access and agree compensation. EirGrid and ESB Networks will meet to discuss and agree details of the construction phase. New transmission lines are constructed subject to the landowner's entitlement to be paid compensation.<sup>5</sup>

Closer to the start of construction the access officer on behalf of ESB Networks will visit the landowner to assess access routes and to give a definitive date for the commencement of works having regard to the landowner's enterprise.

All planned maintenance works on existing lines is carried out by ESB Networks, landowners are consulted in advance to discuss the works.

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<sup>5</sup> Landowners are entitled to compensation for the placing of an electric line on their lands according to section 53 of the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1927 as amended by section 1 of the Electricity (Supply) (Amendment) Act, 1985. EirGrid seeks to agree a package of measure with landowners and their representatives to compensate for losses arising as a result of works on their lands. This is a very important element, which gives landowners assurance that they will not be at a loss resulting from the works. If compensation cannot be agreed landowners can refer the issue of compensation to arbitration under the provisions of the Acquisition of Land (Assessment of Compensation) Act, 1919.

## 3. The Irish Equine Industry

EirGrid recognises the importance of the equine sector to the Irish Economy and that as a nation, Ireland is hugely successful internationally at breeding, horse racing and in many other equestrian disciplines. The Irish equine sector has two significant segments – the thoroughbred Industry and the sporthorse Industry.

### Thoroughbred Industry

The thoroughbred industry in Ireland is very successful and globally competitive. It employs up to 16,000 individuals and it made a direct economic contribution of nearly €1.1 billion to the Irish economy in 2012. This economic value is generated primarily through our internationally renowned breeding industry, but with significant contributions from the management and care of horses in training.

### Breeding Industry

The Irish breeding industry is the main power base of the Irish Thoroughbred industry. It is mainly composed of a large number of small-scale operations spread throughout the country, as well as some large-scale operations which can employ, in some instances, hundreds of people.

Irish stallion farms held a huge advantage up to 2008 in that stallion fees were tax-free. This encouraged stallion owners to base stallions in Ireland. As a consequence, this encouraged mare owners to send high quality mares to Ireland where they often remained and thus increased the strength and depth of the Irish genetic pool. Their successful progeny gave further credence to Ireland's reputation as a leading International Thoroughbred nursery.

However, the removal of the tax-free advantage has coincided with an increase in the number of successful stallions based in the UK. In 2007, nine of the ten top stallions (by total prize money earned by their progeny that year) were based in Ireland. By 2010, seven of the top ten stallions were based in Ireland, and this has reduced further to five in 2013.<sup>6</sup>

As distinct from high value breeding operations focused on flat racing, the typical National Hunt breeder was traditionally a farmer with either dairying or mixed stock farming. Their enterprises were usually small, 1-4 mares and their progeny which were either raced or sold. However, with the frenzied economic activity of the late nineties and the early naughties here in Ireland, National Hunt racehorse ownership increased significantly. This increased the demand for National Hunt horses which encouraged full time National Hunt farms to develop. The economic crash in 2007 had a profound effect on this industry due to its local market place, and prices for stock plummeted. However, there has been some recovery in prices over the past 12 months.

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6 [www.RacingPost.com](http://www.RacingPost.com)

## Racing Yards

There are hundreds of training operations spread throughout Ireland and according to the Horse Racing Ireland Factbook 2014 there are 3,706 racehorse owners in Ireland. Ownership comes in a variety of forms, for example, from the single owner through to syndicates, racing clubs and occasionally limited companies. However, in 2014, approximately 84% of racehorses had a single owner, reflecting the demise in racing clubs and syndicates. The financial return owners make on their investment comes from the prize money, income from breeding and the sale of horses in training. The long-term success of the industry rests on the relative attractiveness of the return - as all other industry participants are directly or indirectly dependent on investment by owners.

There are 640 licensed trainers, training anything from 2 to 400 horses. Trainers are dependant on owners who will either breed or purchase the horses and put them in training. Some trainers have very wealthy owners who can provide the individual trainer with dozens, or in some cases hundreds of horses to train. Other trainers, would own a significant percentage of the horses they train, and depend on selling a successful horse to make ends meet.

Costs to run a yard are high: costs include staff, insurance, rent, transport, feed, bedding, waste-disposal and gallop fees. Daily training rates vary hugely from 25 euros upwards to 60 euros. There are many variables that can affect performance and ultimately the success or failure of that yard.

## Sporthorse Industry

The Sporthorse Industry can be divided into its three integral sections - Breeding, Competition and Leisure. Breeding is self-explanatory; competition horses are horses that are competed regularly - show jumping is extremely popular in Ireland and our riders are some of the best in the world. One day eventing, three day eventing and dressage are also very popular with high levels of participation . Leisure horses are horses that are used for hunting, pony club events and other leisure riding activities.

It is estimated that there are 110,000 horses in the national sporthorse herd, making Ireland one of the most equine dense countries within Europe (per head of population). It has also been estimated that there is one person regularly involved per 2.1 horses, gives rise to a figure of approximately 53,005 or 1.33% of the population regularly involved in the industry. There is 65% private to 35% commercial involvement in the industry. In addition, 28% of animals owned by leisure participants are kept for breeding purposes. Although profit may not be an important factor, these owners need to make informed breeding decisions, as their collective breeding is influential to the status of the national herd. Similar percentages of competition horses were owned either by business (17%) or leisure interest (15%) participants. Therefore a high proportion of competition horses are owned and often competed by leisure riders.

## Equine Management

Humans interact with horses in many ways, but it's possible to classify these management interactions in two broad categories: intensive or extensive management.

Intensive management is best defined where the human and the horse work in close company. This can range from humans handling mares and foals, to exercising yearlings, to breaking horses, riding horses, driving horses, transporting horses etc.

Extensive management is best defined where horses are turned out into paddocks or fields. Although humans will monitor these horses frequently, they will not be in direct contact with them.

Man's intensive interaction with the breeding stock on stud farms occur in periodic bursts: foaling, getting the mares back in foal, weaning, foal handling, and foal and yearling sales preparations. There are usually specialised yards on the farm where these procedures are performed. Otherwise, the stock are normally turned out into paddocks to graze.

In thoroughbred racing stables, man's interaction with the horses is very intensive with little or no extensive management.

In the sporthorse world, broadly speaking, the same applies. On stud farms, there are areas on the farm where intensive equine management occurs and the rest of the farm is usually used for grazing stock. In riding schools, indoor and outdoor arenas, and in sporthorse training yards, there is significant intensive equine management.

# 4. Issues raised with respect to equine

All submissions received in response to the project consultations were reviewed and the following is a list of common issues raised in respect of the concerns of the equine sector.

## 4.1 Impact on the Industry/Business

Some of the submissions express concerns that there would be economic damage to equine enterprises - particularly to the viability of stud farms. In addition some submissions expressed the concern that compulsory purchase option compensation would be inadequate to cover the possible economic damage to stud farms. Furthermore some of the submissions raised the issue of potentially negative impact to the capital value of stud farms.

## **4.2 Primary Constraint**

Many submissions were seeking that equine enterprises should be considered as a primary constraint in relation to the route selection and design process. (A primary constraint is one that should be avoided in the first instance and only considered where no alternatives exist.)

## **4.3 Noise**

Concerns have been raised in relation to potential noise from new transmission lines having an impact on thoroughbred horses.

## **4.4 Equine Health and Welfare**

Some respondents raised concerns about electric and magnetic fields, and their potential impact on equine behaviour, health and performance.

## **4.5 Health & Safety**

Matters of health and safety during construction and maintenance operations have been raised in a number of the submissions. Some submissions outlined that the overhead line would be perceived as a hazard to both staff and thoroughbred horses. Concerns were also raised on the risks of accident, electrocution and risk of conductors falling to ground.

## **4.6 Impact on Property**

A number of submissions refer to a possible reduction in property values as a consequence of high voltage lines – and they express concerns that compensation would be inadequate.

## **4.7 Visual Impact/Environment**

Some submissions raised concerns about the possible negative impacts of high voltage lines and their support structures on the visual character of stud farms. In general, stud farms take great pride in the maintenance and appearance of their farm, as it is part of their service offer.

## **4.8 Undergrounding**

As a mitigating measure to address equine concerns, some of the submissions sought undergrounding of the lines.

## **4.9 Construction & Maintenance Issues**

Submissions received from owners and operators of equine enterprises made the case that thoroughbred horses are highly sensitive and easily startled. As a consequence, many submissions raised concerns about the impact on thoroughbred horses of construction and maintenance activities at equine enterprises including stud farms.

## **4.10 Insurance**

Some of the submissions outlined the high value of bloodstock and raised concerns about any potential loss that might occur in the case of fallen lines. In particular, they sought clarification and reassurance about where liability lies in the event of such an incident.

## **4.11 Consultation**

A number of submissions expressed disappointment that landowners are not consulted earlier - even though their land is considered during the corridor selection stage.



# 5. Response to the issues raised

Where we have responses to the issues raised, we have provided them below. Other issues have led to a number of recommendations that we intend to implement following consultation with key stakeholders. The recommendations are listed in chapter 6.

## 5.1 Impact on Industry/Business

EirGrid recognises the importance of the equine sector to the Irish Economy and that equine enterprises are businesses. The development of the transmission system is required to meet Ireland's need for a high quality, reliable electricity grid. This is critical for the future growth and prosperity of the country, and to facilitate the EU objective of supplying 40% of electricity from renewable sources by 2020. In developing the transmission system, EirGrid does not intend to negatively impact on equine enterprises. We will work with owners and operators of equine enterprises including stud farms to minimise any impacts that may arise. That is why early and regular engagement is the key to finding feasible solutions.

As part of the commitments outlined in this report, we will engage with landowners at a local level through personnel who understand the concerns of equine enterprises and the broader equine sector.

## 5.2 Primary Constraint

We understand that many stakeholders want EirGrid to avoid land being used for equine activities when routing power lines or cables.

Equine enterprises, such as the breeding, rearing and training of thoroughbred horses are not identified as constraints at the corridor selection stage of new overhead electric line projects. However, such enterprises are considered at the line routeing stage of projects – to minimise the impact of chosen line routes.

To address this concern, and to discover whether EirGrid was treating the equine sector in line with international practice, we sought to learn more about how this issue is handled elsewhere. In particular, we wanted to understand how other TSOs treat equine enterprises when developing new electricity transmission lines, and to see if these learnings could improve EirGrid's approach.

A survey was carried out amongst European Transmission System Operators via the representative body ENTSO-E.<sup>7</sup> The results show that the respondents do not have a policy of avoiding agriculture and equine enterprises when routeing new transmission lines (please refer to appendix 1).

EirGrid has also consulted with other international organisations such as Cigre (International Council on Large Electric Systems), RGI (Renewables Grid Initiative Organisation) and EUCI (Electric Utility Consultants Inc). These consultations were to find out if there were any recommended or special practices concerning equines and the development of transmission lines. EirGrid is not aware of any other TSO that treats equines as a primary constraint at route selection stage, and neither did we identify any special practices for the equine sector.

However, we do recognise the greater importance of the Irish Equine Industry compared to other European countries. EirGrid notes that Ireland breeds more thoroughbred horses than any other country in Europe and is the fourth largest producer in the world overall. We are committed to working with owners and operators of equine enterprises earlier in our projects. Our goal is to use this earlier consultation process to minimise the impact on farms and thoroughbred horses throughout our route selection and construction stages of project development.

As part of our commitment to improve our process for consultation during project development, we will review the approach to the various considerations that must be taken into account in routing a power line or cable.

### 5.3 Noise

Due to the sensitivity of thoroughbred horses, many of the submissions raised concerns about an increased potential for injury to horses and staff as a result of horses being spooked by noise from overhead lines.

To address concerns in relation to noise from overhead lines, we have commissioned a survey to measure noise. This will require measurements over a prolonged time period in different weather conditions under one of our 400kV lines. This research has commenced, but at time of going to print, the study has not been completed. The findings from this survey will be published when available.

### 5.4 Equine Health and Welfare

Possible impacts on equine health from electric and magnetic fields were raised in some of the submissions. EirGrid commissioned a separate review of research in this area. The engineering and scientific group, Exponent,<sup>8</sup> undertook this and the full review is contained in appendix 2. In relation to horses, Exponent summarises that *'No scientific studies of potential EMF effects on horses were identified in the literature review.'*

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<sup>7</sup> The European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity). Responses were received from most of the major TSOs operating in Western Europe including RTE (France) who operate the largest grid among ENTSO-E members at 104,684km, and our nearest neighbours in England and Wales (National Grid).

<sup>8</sup> [www.exponent.com](http://www.exponent.com)

However, more broadly the report concludes that *“the available scientific evidence summarised in the current report does not provide consistent or convincing evidence that either electric or magnetic fields associated with the Irish electric transmission system may adversely affect the livestock or crops produced on Irish farmlands”*.

We are committed to a process of on-going monitoring of research on EMF, and we will provide the latest information to the general public on the issue. We will also continue to design and operate the transmission system in accordance with current international guidelines on EMF (ICNIRP), as reviewed by the World Health Organisation, and as endorsed by the EU and the Irish Government.

## 5.5 Health & Safety

Matters of health and safety during construction and operational phases have been raised in many of the submissions. Safety is a core value for EirGrid and safety is never compromised. All construction and maintenance work is carried out in compliance with all legislation and Health and Safety Authority guidelines. The lines themselves are designed and constructed to the highest national and international standards and follow best practice in relation to construction and maintenance.

Electricity is a powerful and safe energy when it is treated with care and with a common-sense attitude to safety. Just like other aspects of farm life – such as handling animals, working with machinery, handling chemicals - an awareness of safe practices is essential in order to minimise the risk of injury or death.

Any person working near overhead lines has a responsibility to prevent dangerous contact with the overhead line. The Health and Safety Authority publication, Guidelines for Safe Working Near Overhead Electricity Lines in Agriculture<sup>9</sup> outlines the control measures applying to the party in a position to implement the precautions specified therein. In addition, two further publications are available from ESB Networks that provide guidance to farmers. These are *Farm Well... Farm Safely* and the second, published last year, is *Farm Safely with Electricity*.<sup>10</sup>

As part of the commitments outlined in this report, EirGrid will develop a Landowner’s Handbook, which will contain a full suite of information and provide clarity as is necessary to landowners and equine enterprises to address the issues raised during consultation.

Some submissions were concerned that overhead lines could be a hazard to both staff and thoroughbred horses, due to a perception that overhead lines could increase the risk of accident. Appendix 3 contains a report that was prepared to assist EirGrid in responding to the equine concerns that have been received. This report provides information relating to ‘Equine Psychology and Behaviour’, which concludes that most horses will acclimatise to new situations. This is one of the main reasons why man has used horses so effectively in many roles for centuries.

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9 [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie)

10 [www.esbnetworks.ie](http://www.esbnetworks.ie)

## 5.6 Impact on Property

There is a statutory entitlement to compensation for directly affected landowners. The statutory entitlement to compensation is considered to offer an appropriate mitigation to landowners in respect of the impact, if any, upon property arising from the development of strategic transmission infrastructure.

As part of the commitments outlined in this report, EirGrid will work to develop a package of measures to address the practical concerns for landowners and equine enterprises resulting from the construction of electricity transmission infrastructure on their land. These include measures to minimise impact on the land and will include clarity around compensation arising from the location of high voltage power lines.

## 5.7 Visual Impact/Environment

EirGrid will endeavour to route new lines and site structures in consultation with owners so as to minimise any possible negative impacts on equine enterprises. As part of the commitments outlined in this report, we will engage with landowners at a local level through personnel who understand the concerns of equine enterprises and the broader equine sector.

## 5.8 Undergrounding

In response to calls for the projects to be undergrounded and as a separate initiative, EirGrid has committed to conduct a comprehensive underground analysis for the Grid Link and Grid West projects. EirGrid will work with the Government appointed Independent Expert Panel to review underground and overhead options before the projects proceed to the next stages of project development.

As outlined in our recently published 'Draft Grid Development Strategy',<sup>11</sup> that while underground technology has always been considered during initial project scoping and technical analysis, in future we will always publish underground options for public consultation. We also commit to engaging with the public before we identify a preferred technology. This consultation will explain the transmission technology options, and then seek feedback from stakeholders.

This will assist us in determining the best transmission technology for future projects. We are committed to looking for alternative options that may avoid, or reduce, the necessity for new overhead lines.

## 5.9 Construction & Maintenance Issues

Concerns with respect to the impact of construction and maintenance activities on equine enterprises have been raised in many of the equine related submissions. As ESB Networks are responsible for construction and maintenance, we have discussed these issues with them. EirGrid recognises that thoroughbred horses are highly sensitive and can be easily spooked. EirGrid also recognises that impacts will result from these activities on the land and the normal activities occurring thereon.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.eirgrid.com](http://www.eirgrid.com)

EirGrid endeavours to minimise these impacts by:

1. Having the right people at the interface between construction teams and landowners or owners of equine enterprises including stud farms. These are people who understand the equine sector, who can understand the issues from the landowner's perspective and work to resolve any issues that arise.
2. Good communications between the parties involved.
3. Ensuring that landowners are fully compensated for any losses legitimately arising due to activities associated with the line.

Concerns regarding helicopter patrols were raised in a considerable number of the equine submissions. In accordance with EirGrid instructions, it is the ESB that undertakes all maintenance work on the transmission network. The ESB have notification procedures in place for farms with equines, and these procedures have worked well in the past. The ESB will ensure that all equine farms affected by new lines are facilitated with the opportunity to be included in their database. This will ensure that there is appropriate consultation and notice in relation to any maintenance work on lines - and in particular, to the annual helicopter inspections.

Concerns were expressed in some submissions in relation to the spread of disease among horses during the construction and maintenance phases. In response to this concern, EirGrid can provide the following reassurances: Construction crews will observe best practice in relation to disease prevention and precautions on all equine holdings. The ESB code of practice in relation to the prevention of the spread of animal diseases is contained in section 4.0 of the ESB Code of Practice in Relation to Access to Land and/or Premises.<sup>12</sup>

At the planning and route selection stage personnel will also have to access the land - and we will ensure that best practice is followed at all times. (Please refer to appendix 4 for EirGrid's Code of Practice in Relation to Access to Land and/or Premises). A review will also be undertaken so as to improve on the current practice and procedures, where possible.

Recognising the significance of construction and maintenance issues for landowners, EirGrid, as part of this review has committed to producing a "landowner handbook" to address in detail the specific issues that have been raised. This is outlined in section 6. Additionally a 'Package of Measures' is required to be put in place of which compensation is an important element. This would also be consistent with findings from the ENTSO-E Survey of TSOs (Appendix 1) in that most TSOs have codes of practice or packages of measures setting out how works on lands will be undertaken. As stated in section 2 of this report, landowners are entitled to compensation for any losses arising as a result of works on their lands.

## 5.10 Insurance

Some of the submissions raised concerns in relation to where liability lies in the case of fallen lines. The position with respect to indemnification is clearly outlined as follows (the Board refers to the Electricity Supply Board);

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<sup>12</sup> [www.esbnetworks.ie](http://www.esbnetworks.ie)

The Board shall indemnify and keep indemnified the landowner, his servants, agents, licensees and invitees against all sums in respect of loss or damage, claims, demands, costs and expenses which the landowner shall become legally liable to pay as compensation for any illness or accidental bodily injury or accidental loss of or damage to property where such injury or damage is caused by, arises from, is traceable or connected with the works or equipment other than in consequence of any malicious act or omission on part of the landowner.

The Board shall pay compensation to the landowner, his servants, agents, licensees and invitees in respect of any illness or bodily injury or loss or damage to material property suffered by him or them (together with all consequential loss arising there from) where that same is caused by, arises from, is traceable to or connected with the works, or equipment other than in consequence of any malicious or criminally reckless act or omission of the landowner and except insofar as the same has been made good by the Board without loss to the landowner.

The above is without prejudice to the Board's and Landowners' Statutory and Common Law rights. Illness in this context is understood to mean damage to the personal health and well-being of the landowner or his animals or his agents, servants, licensees and invitees. It is noted and agreed that the ESB will issue, to any individual landowner requiring same, a letter of acknowledgement that the Board's wayleave over his land is subject to the provisions of the code of practice, including specifically the indemnity clause.

## 5.11 Consultation

As one of the commitments outlined in this report, EirGrid will engage with key stakeholders to agree principles of engagement for future contacts with landowners to improve the effectiveness of our consultation process. As stated earlier, EirGrid is committed to the development of a Landowner Charter.

This Charter will clearly outline the level of professionalism and the response time by which landowners can expect to have their queries answered.

In response to concerns regarding consultation, we have produced a separate report titled *'Reviewing and improving our public consultation process'* that specifically deals with our consultation process when developing new transmission lines. Our consultation report addresses concerns expressed by many, including landowners and equine enterprises, on how EirGrid engages with stakeholders during project development. The report is published on the EirGrid website.<sup>13</sup>

EirGrid is also committed to specific improvements in our approach to consultation that reflect the importance of landowners and the wider farming community to the development of the transmission network.

As outlined in more detail in section 6, we are appointing Agricultural Liaison Officers (ALOs). The liaison officers will be located regionally and will liaise with landowners on all agricultural and equine matters.

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13 [www.eirgrid.com](http://www.eirgrid.com)



## 6. Commitments

Taking into account the concerns raised EirGrid is now proposing a series of commitments. EirGrid would welcome a dialogue with our stakeholders to help shape our relationship with the equine sector. This will ensure that the electricity transmission infrastructure - necessary to this country's economic progress - can be put in place.

### Theme 1 – Provide Greater Recognition

- EirGrid recognises the value and important role of the equine sector to the Irish economy.
- EirGrid recognises that equine enterprises and landowners are key partners for grid development.
- EirGrid recognises that transmission infrastructure impacts on equine enterprises.

#### 1. Develop a Landowner Charter

EirGrid, with the assistance of key stakeholders, will develop a Landowner Charter. This Charter will clearly outline the level of professionalism and the response time by which landowners can expect to have their queries answered.

It is important to note that there are existing codes of practice that apply to the relationships between landowners and the development of the electricity network. EirGrid's Landowner Charter will build on the success of these codes.

### Theme 2 – Initiate Increased Engagement

- EirGrid will engage with key equine stakeholders to agree principles of engagement for future contacts with landowners to improve the effectiveness of our consultation process.
- EirGrid recognises the need to engage with landowners at a local level through personnel who understand the concerns of equine farmers and the broader equine sector.
- We will improve the quality and delivery of information to landowners.

#### 2. Improve our Process for Consultation during Project Development

In line with the commitments made within our report '*Reviewing and Improving Our Public Consultation Process*',<sup>14</sup> we will improve the effectiveness of our consultation process to clearly define consultation opportunities, to explain how feedback can be provided and to efficiently assess feedback received. In addition, we will review the approach to the various considerations (constraints) that must be taken into account in routing a power line or cable.

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<sup>14</sup> Report available at [www.eirgrid.com](http://www.eirgrid.com)

### **3. Appoint Agricultural Liaison Officers**

EirGrid will appoint Agricultural Liaison Officers. The liaison officers will be located regionally and will liaise with landowners on all agricultural and equine matters. This liaison will take place at each stage of the process, from initial landowner identification, through construction and finally to the reinstatement of the land. Following construction, they will ensure all matters are closed out to the satisfaction of landowners.

### **4. Develop a Landowner's Handbook**

EirGrid will develop a Landowner's Handbook, which will contain a full suite of information and provide clarity as is necessary to landowners and owners of equine enterprises to address the issues raised during consultation.

## **Theme 3 - Develop a Package of Measures**

### **5. Develop a Package of Measures**

EirGrid will work to develop a package of measures to address the practical concerns for landowners and equine enterprises resulting from the construction of electricity transmission infrastructure on their land. These include measures to minimise impact on the land and the enterprise and will include clarity around compensation.

## 7. Implementation

EirGrid is committed to working collaboratively with equine enterprises and their representatives in the development and construction of a stronger electricity transmission system.

It is currently envisaged that the majority of these recommendations will be implemented during 2015 recognising that a number of them will require further discussion and agreement with stakeholders to bring about their implementation. It is our intention to continuously review our approach to consultation to meet the evolving needs of those who participate in and engage with our projects.

# Appendices

1. Entso-e survey regarding 'Approach of European Grid Operators to Agricultural and Equine Land Uses'.
2. Exponent Review of Research on Livestock and Crops in Relation to Electric and Magnetic Fields from High Voltage Transmission Lines.
3. Report on 'Equine Psychology and Behaviour'.
4. 'EirGrid Code of Practice in Relation to Access to Land and/or Premises'.

# Notes

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