The Grid West project

Project Information Brochure Stage 2: progress update

Summer 2015

EIRGRID

The current. The future.

About EirGrid

EirGrid is a state-owned company, responsible for managing and operating Ireland's transmission grid. We work to ensure a safe, secure supply of electricity to homes, businesses and industry across the island of Ireland. Our work also responds to policies set at local, national and European levels. In essence, we develop the transmission grid to guarantee a secure supply of electricity. This is essential now, and is an investment for future generations.

It is our job to manage the need for power across the electricity transmission grid. We forecast when and where Ireland needs electricity: hour-to-hour, day-to-day, and year-to-year.

We work to ensure there is enough electricity for industry to prosper, and for employment to grow. We also keep the electricity transmission grid secure and reliable. This grid carries high-power electricity from where it is generated, to where it is needed. Industrial or high-tech companies connect directly to our transmission grid, as they use large amounts of electricity.

About the Grid West project

Ireland's national goal is to meet 40% of electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020 – these include wind, wave and tidal energy. A significant amount of renewable energy generation is planned in the west of Ireland. EirGrid assessed the existing network in north Mayo to see if it could carry the power from these additional generators. We determined that the existing network, even when upgraded, could not do so. Our studies determined that a high-voltage circuit was required to meet this need.

Grid West is our name for this new circuit. This project will connect more renewable energy to the national grid, which will help Ireland meet its EU targets. It will also reinforce the transmission network in the west, and support economic development in this region.

What was originally proposed?

We launched the project in 2012. We considered many factors when reviewing the type of technology that meets the need of the project. These included: demand forecasts, available technology, cost, and environmental considerations.

After we analysed all factors our initial conclusion was that a 400kV high-voltage alternating current (AC) overhead line was needed.

What are we considering now?

In 2014, we agreed with public feedback that we had ruled out underground options too soon. We reassessed these to see if they could meet the needs of the project. We also considered how they performed in environmental, economic and technical terms. Finally, we investigated if a lower voltage solution could meet the capacity needs of the project. Based on this review, we found three possible options:

- a fully underground high voltage direct current cable;
- a 400kV overhead line including 8km of compensatory undergrounding of an existing 220kV line into Flagford and;
- a 220kV overhead line with partial use of underground cable including 8km into Flagford and a possibility of an additional 22km underground cable along the route. The maximum amount of 220kV underground cable in the region is 30km.

Background to the Independent Expert Panel

In January 2014, the then Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources – Mr Pat Rabbitte TD – established an Independent Expert Panel. Their role was to assess if the work we did on overhead and underground options was neutral and easy to compare.

All of our work on the options was compiled in a single report submitted to the Independent Expert Panel earlier this year.

In April 2015, the Panel provided a positive opinion to the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on the completeness and objectivity of the studies undertaken for each option.

What is happening now?

We are now publishing this report for people to consider the work we have done. The three options contained within the report are all feasible to build and implement.

What will happen next?

Separately, we are finalising our other consultation commitments including our new approach to consultation. This work will be complete in the autumn. We will then be consulting with people on the options and how we propose to select one that is preferred.

How do I find out more?

You can get in touch with the project team or provide feedback using the contact details below:

Telephone: Lo-call 1890 94 08 02

Email: gridwest@eirgrid.com

Website: www.eirgridprojects.com/projects/gridwest

Letter: Grid West Project Office
EirGrid
PO Box 98
An Post Delivery Service
Quarrypoint Business Park
Castlebar
Co. Mayo

Visit the Grid West Information Centres:

- The Square, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon
- Bury Street, Ballina, Co, Mayo
- Unit 2, Mercantile Plaza Block C, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim
- Linenhall Street, Castlebar, Co. Mayo (by appointment)

You can also contact the Community Liaison Officer for the west region through any of the above channels.

If you wish to receive general text updates on the Grid West project, please text GridWest to 51444.

For county specific updates (i.e. Mayo, Galway, Sligo, Roscommon or Leitrim) please text the county name (e.g. Mayo) to 51444

Standard SMS rates apply for both these text services.

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