



# North Connacht 110 kV Project

Autumn 2021 Update



Delivering a cleaner energy future



# Who are EirGrid – and what do we do?

EirGrid is responsible for a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity – now and in the future.

We develop, manage and operate the electricity transmission grid. This grid brings power from where it is generated to where it is needed throughout Ireland. We use the grid to supply power to industry and businesses that use large amounts of electricity. The grid also powers the distribution network and supplies the electricity you use every day in your homes, businesses, schools, hospitals and farms.

## About this update

This update is for you as stakeholders, communities, landowners and members of the public, interested in finding out more about the North Connacht 110 kV Project which is progressing as an underground cable. This document provides up to date information on the project, including:

- What is the North Connacht 110 kV Project,
- Our six-step approach to consultation and engagement,
- What has happened on the project so far,
- Details about the best performing route option,
- Next steps and how you can get involved,
- Community forum and community benefit fund.

You can find previous project updates on our website <http://www.eirgridgroup.com/the-grid/projects/north-connacht/the-project/>



# What is the North Connacht 110 kV Project?

The North Connacht 110 kV Project will create a new circuit in the electricity transmission network in the North West of Ireland. The new circuit will enhance the network in the area and provide capacity to connect new demands for electricity to support economic growth in the area, and to connect new renewable generation to help with meeting our Climate Action Plan targets.

The North Connacht 110 kV Project consists of the following elements:

- A new 110 kV underground electricity cable circuit from Moy Substation in Ballina Co. Mayo to Tonroe Substation in Ballaghaderreen Co. Roscommon.
- Upgrade and extension work to Moy and Tonroe substation.
- An upgrade of the existing 110 kV overhead line between Tonroe and Flagford substations in County Roscommon. The location of the line will not change.

## Why is the North Connacht project needed and what are the benefits?

As of 2020, around 40% of the electricity that we use in Ireland each year comes from renewable sources. The government's Climate Action Plan sets out the target to achieve 70% of electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030.

The North Connacht 110 kV project is an important step in reaching this target. At present, a large amount of renewable electricity is generated in the North Connacht region and more is planned over the coming years.

As the current local electricity network cannot manage the expected flow of power, we need to improve the electricity network in the region.

The new circuit will help strengthen the grid in the region, which will also help attract industry and drive economic growth

## Benefits



### Competition

Apply downward pressure on the cost of electricity.



### Sustainability

Help facilitate Ireland's transition to a low carbon energy future.



### Security of Supply

Improve electricity supply for Ireland's electricity consumers.



### Economic

Contribute to the regional economy and support foreign direct investment.



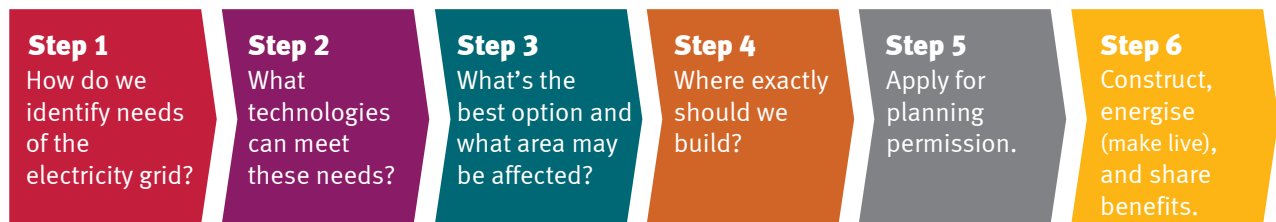
### Community

Deliver community benefit in the areas that facilitate the project infrastructure.

# Our six-step approach to consultation and engagement

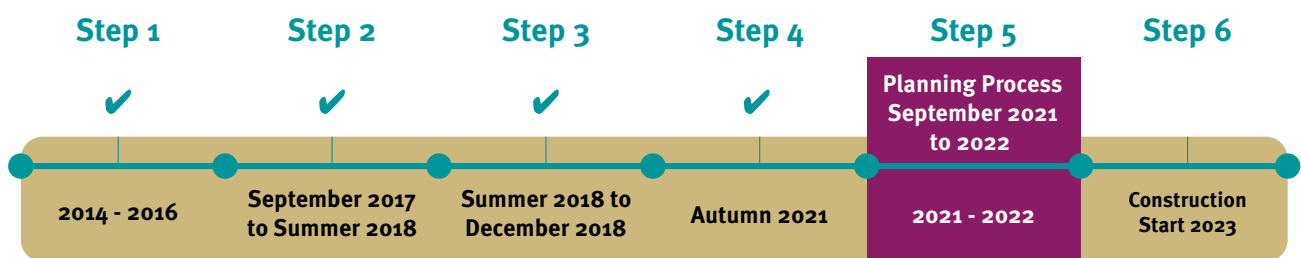
Our ‘**Have Your Say**’ publication outlines our commitment to engage with, and listen to, stakeholders. It outlines our detailed six-step approach to developing projects, and how you can get involved at every step.

Our ‘**Public Engagement Strategy**’ publication reinforces our commitment to engaging with our stakeholders in the development of projects like this. You can get a copy of both of these publications at [www.eirgrid.ie](http://www.eirgrid.ie).



**Figure 1: Our six-step approach to developing the electricity grid**

Step 4 is now concluding and we are moving to step five.



**Figure 2: Our six-step approach for the North Connacht 110 kV Project**

## What has happened on the project so far?

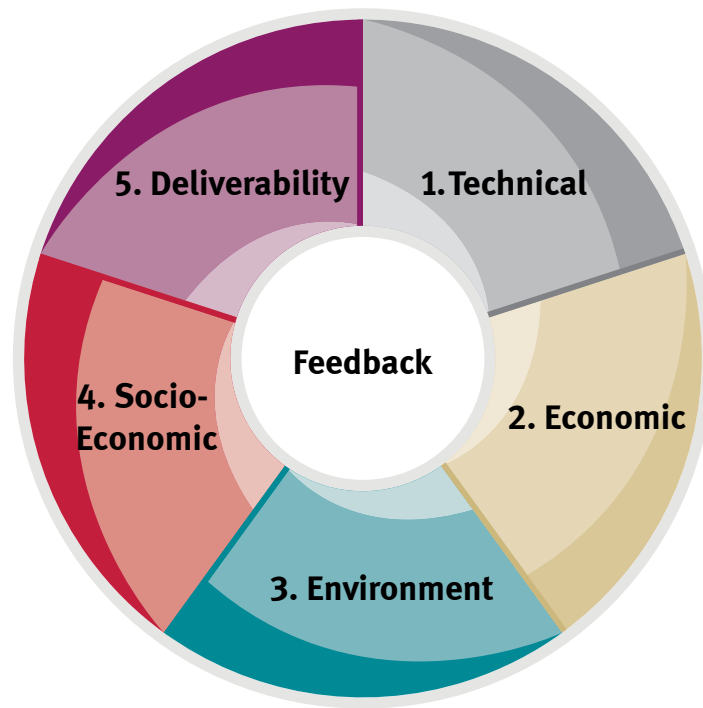
**In Step 1**, we identified the need for the North Connacht 110 kV Project.

**In Step 2**, we compiled a shortlist of technical options, which went out for public consultation between 2017 and 2018. This included a mix of overhead line, underground cable and up voltage technologies. Four of those options were taken forward to Step 3 in April 2019.

**In Step 3**, we consulted with you on the shortlisted technology options which included overhead line and underground cable. This feedback, along with additional studies and investigations helped us to identify two best performing technology options.

**In Step 4**, we identified the study area for this project and consulted with you on the various aspects such as the proposed new overhead line options and new underground cable options along with the upgrading of the existing overhead line from Flagford to Tonroe. Following engagement and assessment on the technology options, the underground cable option was identified as the Emerging Best Performing Option (EBPO). We then consulted further with you on the development of a route for this underground cable option. The results of this work can be viewed on our project website [www.eirgrid.com/NorthConnachtProject](http://www.eirgrid.com/NorthConnachtProject).

An underground cable route has been identified through stakeholder and community engagement, by using the multi criteria assessment tool which assesses the five key factors; Technical, Economic, Environmental, Socio-Economic and Deliverability.



**Figure 3: Multi Criteria Assessment Tool**

## Step 4 Studies

In Step 4, we completed a range of assessments and investigations. These built on those completed in Steps 1, 2 and 3. Through this work EirGrid have established a Best Performing Option – 110 kV Underground Cable circuit route from Moy to Tonroe. We have assessed and compared these investigations under five categories:

1. Technical aspects; Compliance with Electricity Standards/ Operational Aspects,
2. Economic factors; Project Implementation costs,
3. Environmental factors; Biodiversity / habitats/ ground conditions/ archaeology,
4. Socio-economic factors – such as the local economy and local amenities; and
5. Deliverability factors – such as timeline and potential risks.

Your feedback has also been considered as part of these studies.

## Step 4 Engagement and Consultation

We engaged extensively with stakeholders throughout this step of the project. We held a 13-week consultation phase from September 2020 to December 2020.

Due to on-going Covid 19 restrictions we moved to an online platform to provide key project updates and engage with all stakeholders and members of the community.

Throughout 2021, we have been engaging with local stakeholders on an ongoing basis. In addition to this, we made additional efforts in reaching out to the public. Some of these activities included:

- Media campaign: “Upgrading Lines – Upgrading Lives”,
- Online: 11 Webinars, Digital advertising, Project web page, Questionnaires/Surveys, Virtual Exhibition space, Animated video,
- Offline: 3 leaflet drops to 41,000 registered addresses within the study area, Freepost service, telephone call-back service, local advertising, press releases, radio ads and radio shows; and
- Letter: Distribution of a project update letter to 6171 residents and businesses in the project area.



# Best Performing Option

The North Connacht 110 kV Project is now at the end of Step 4 of our six-step process. Following continued engagement with communities, local landowners, relevant agencies and completion of further studies, we can confirm the best performing route option for the North Connacht 110 kV underground electricity cable.

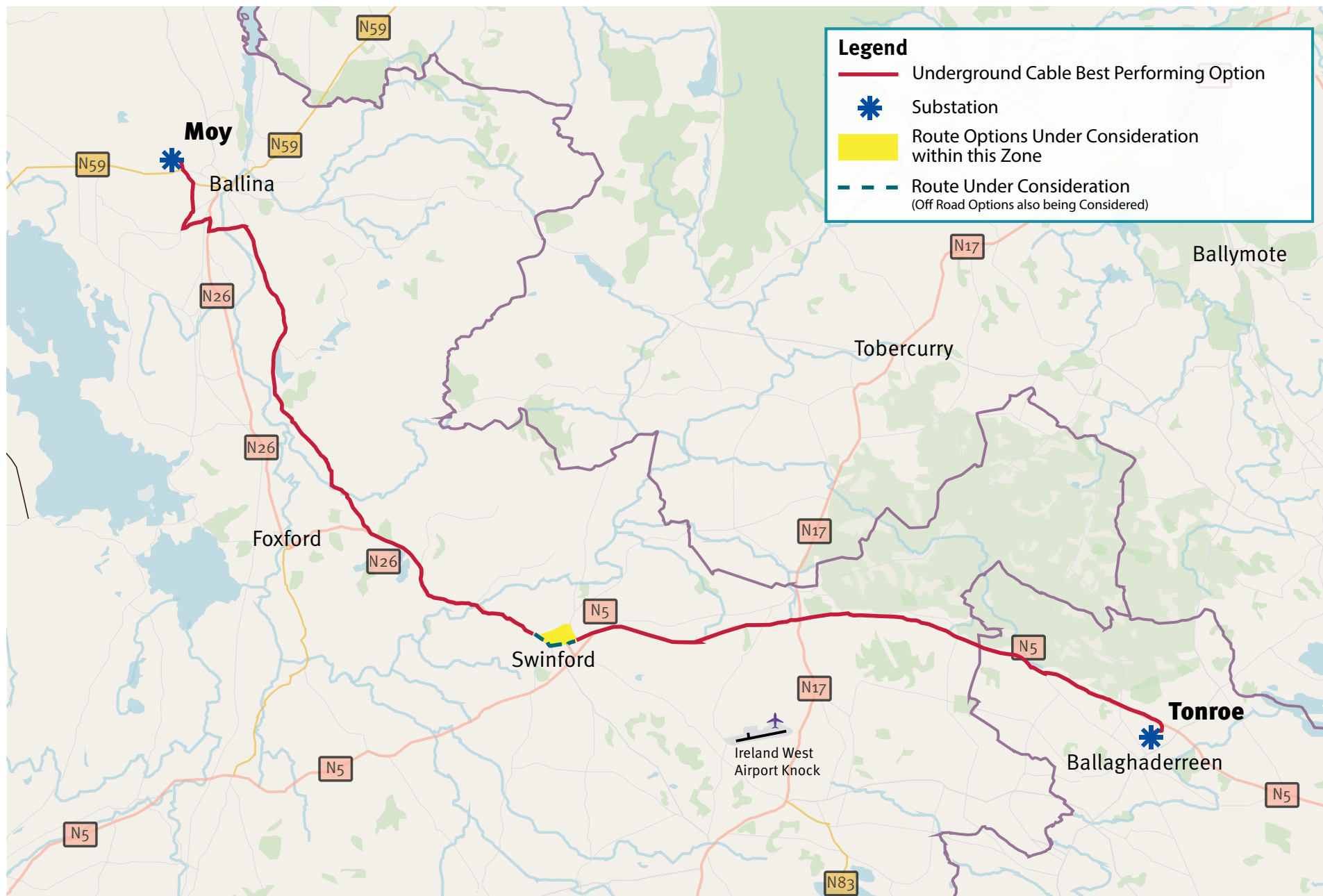
## Under Ground Cable Route

The 110 kV underground cable circuit route runs from Moy 110 kV Substation in Ballina Co. Mayo to Tonroe 110 kV Substation in Ballaghaderreen Co. Roscommon. It is approximately 60 km in length. It bypasses major towns and villages such as Ballina, Foxford and Ballaghaderreen. Further assessments are ongoing to establish the best performing routing of the cable at Swinford – this information will be made available later this year.

The underground cable route will be mainly constructed in public roads, however, to avoid constraints and obstacles along the route, it is necessary to construct some of the cable off road, at various sections.

Approximately 53 km of the underground cable route will be constructed on a combination of road types from Moy to Tonroe such as; the N5, N26, L1321, N59 etc. The off-road sections of the underground cable account for approximately 7 km of the overall route. Sections of off-road cable will be mainly located at Ballaghaderreen, Swinford, Ballina amongst other locations; we are engaging with local landowners in relation to this.

The underground cable route will also be required to cross watercourses, for example drainage ditches and rivers. To cross these obstacles two separate methods can be used. One method is an open cut trench and the other is utilizing horizontal directional drilling.

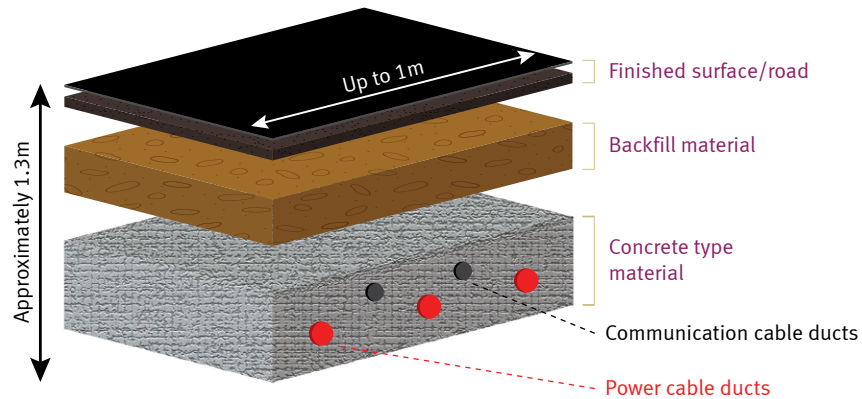


**Figure 4: Map of best performing route option**



# What does underground cable construction look like?

We will use High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) for this project. This form of electricity transmission is used internationally in electricity networks and in Ireland. To achieve electricity transmission using alternating current (AC), three cables would be required. These three cables would be laid in the same trench in a road. The trench width is expected to be up to 1 metre wide (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5: Typical HVAC underground cable duct arrangement**

Temporary passing bays (figure 9) will be required at some joint bay locations to maintain traffic movement during cable installation works.

When construction starts, we will consult and work closely with local stakeholders to minimise any disruption that may be caused by the construction phase of the project. The following photos provide a typical idea of what construction may look like.



**Figure 6: A typical cable duct installation in the road**



**Figure 7: A typical jointing bay where cables are connected**



**Figure 8: Cables being pulled into the ducts and jointing bay**



**Figure 9: A typical passing bay in operation during cable jointing**



# What's happening next

## Step 5 at a glance

A planning application will be prepared for submission directly to An Bord Pleanála.

It is anticipated that the application will be submitted in Q1 2022.

EirGrid will continue to engage locally on options for Swinford.

The planning applications will include preparation of environmental and ecological appraisals and reports. Engagement will continue throughout the remaining steps of the project. Once the applications have been submitted, the project enters a phase of statutory consultation. This allows members of the public to make submissions regarding the project to either An Bord Pleanála or the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. If successful, it is anticipated that there will be a final decision made to undertake the project, and the project would move into the construction phase in 2023.

## Community Forum and Benefit Fund:

### Community Forum:

#### What is the Community Forum?

The purpose of the Forum is to ensure that stakeholder and community views are understood and properly considered during project delivery. The group will provide a Forum for dialogue between stakeholders with interests in the project and the project team. The Forum will be independently chaired.

#### Role of the Forum:

- Represent the views of their organisation or community in relation to the project ,
- Consider the project and provide guidance on local needs and priorities,
- Assist in enabling the resolution of local issues resulting from the project in a timely manner,
- Provide feedback to the project team,
- Facilitate a 'local voice' and communicate information to a wider group of regional and local stakeholders.



### Membership of the Forum:

Membership of the Forum will consist of representatives from local resident and community associations, disability and special interest groups and business and sporting organisations in the project area. Membership is also extended to local public representatives.

### Establishment of the Forum:

We will host an information evening in September to inform communities and stakeholders about the Community Forum and Community Benefit Fund.

Meetings will be set according to specific project engagement needs, themes and objectives, with a minimum of four meetings per year.



### Community Benefit Fund:

#### What is the Community Benefit Fund and what community projects will it be used for?

The aim of the Community Benefit Fund is to support local projects in the communities near new electricity infrastructure. We intend to deliver a Community Benefit Fund at the same time as the construction programme.

Our Policy is to focus on projects for community, sustainability and biodiversity, however we will consider other options put forward by the community.

A dedicated fund for each grid improvement project will provide direct benefits to communities who are closest to new transmission infrastructure. These funds, which are proportional to the scale of the project, support local good causes, help communities transform their area, and provide the opportunity to each community, to become or remain a 'sustainable energy community'.

Our overall aim is to increase public and environment wellbeing in the community and leave a positive legacy in the communities hosting our infrastructure.

An independent fund administrator will be appointed to oversee the community benefit fund.

The local Community Forum will lead the development of a local Community Benefit project strategy.

This will be agreed before the community benefit funding is released.

This strategy will include:

- Community needs analysis (including socio-economic analysis),
- Community benefit priorities,
- Potential complementary initiatives and partnerships (for example, LEADER); and
- Other relevant information.



## Step 5 at a glance

**Step 1** Completed identifying needs of the grid.

**Step 2** Completed identifying the technologies that can meet these needs.

**Step 3** What's the best option and what area may be affected?

**Step 4** Where exactly should we build?

**Step 5** Apply for planning permission.

**Step 6** Construct, energise (make live), and share benefits.

### Step 5 At a glance

#### How Can I Stay Informed?

If you would like to find out more information, register to receive update emails or give feedback on this project, you can email **NorthConnachtProject@EirGrid.com**

#### Who can I contact?

Our Liaison Officers will continue to make themselves available as the project evolves.

You can contact our Community Liaison Officer, **Eoghan O'Sullivan**.

Call: **+353 87 247 7732**

Email: **Eoghan.osullivan@eirgrid.com**





The Oval, 160 Shelbourne Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin D04 FW28 • Telephone: 01 677 1700 • [www.eirgrid.ie](http://www.eirgrid.ie)



Printed on recycled paper