



Shaping Our Electricity Future

Consultation and engagement report

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1. Executive summary

Ireland has a target to ensure that at least 70% and up to 80% of its electricity comes from renewable sources by the year 2030. EirGrid, who operate the flow of power on the national electricity grid and plan for its future, have set out four different approaches to ensuring that ambition can be achieved, and that the projected increases in demand over that time period can be met.

The commitment to decarbonise is at the heart of *Shaping Our Electricity Future*, a report which sets out four different approaches to achieving at least 70% renewable energy by 2030. EirGrid commissioned Traverse to deliver a series of engagement events to understand public views on the different approaches to achieving the renewable target, as well as undertaking analysis of responses to a public consultation.

The engagement events included an Industry Forum, a Civil Society Forum and a Deliberative Dialogue. The deliberative dialogue examined public attitudes through a series of three workshops with reconvened members of the public. EirGrid also engaged directly with key national and regional stakeholders throughout the consultation period.

The engagement activities were designed to help answer the following research questions:

- What do stakeholders think about the proposals for each workstream?
- Which proposals do they prefer, and why?
- What is the conditionality of their views?
- What values, motivators, and messaging influence their views, and how?

1.1. The wider context

Before discussing the particular approaches proposed as part of *Shaping Our Electricity Future*, participants in all of the engagement streams considered the bigger picture of climate change and the specific role EirGrid would play as Ireland moved away from its reliance on fossil fuels. In the deliberative dialogue, participants explored a range of topics relating to sustainability and the ultimate ambition of net zero carbon emissions. This provided context for the more focussed discussions, enabling them to have informed discussions about the future energy policy.

1.2. The different approaches

Through the consultation, and within each stream of engagement, participants were asked to consider the four different approaches EirGrid have proposed for achieving the 2030 renewable target. Participants were told each approach would require investments in network development projects throughout the country, with costs ranging from €500 million to €2 billion. The four approaches are as follows:

1. **Generation-led:** Government policy would influence where renewable



energy is generated – favouring locations where the grid is already strong;

2. **Developer-led:** EirGrid continue to connect new sources of renewable electricity as requested in any location;
3. **Technology-led:** The use of technical solutions by EirGrid to make the grid more resilient so it can better handle the variable nature of renewable energy; and
4. **Demand-led:** Government policy determines where large energy users locate in Ireland.

Participants were generally positive about the generation-led and demand-led options. Most favoured the first option but a significant number of people felt that a combination of generation-led and demand-led would be the best solution. Participants were less enthusiastic about the other two options with technology-led the least favoured of the four.

1.2.1. Attitudes towards the generation-led approach

There was a reasonable level of support for the generation-led approach, with many participants favouring it on grounds of cost and because it was seen as the having the best chance of meeting the 2030 targets.

Some participants were concerned about the geographical concentration of infrastructure under this approach and thought that patterns of demand could change in future. They were also uneasy about the potential environmental impacts of increased offshore power generation.

1.2.2. Attitudes towards the developer-led approach

Fewer participants supported the developer-led approach than other approaches. Participants who did favour it, often in conjunction with other approaches, thought there would be a need for developer finance and expertise to meet the 2030 targets.

Many participants felt that this approach was the least preferable, with some reacting in a strongly negative way. Some participants rejected the approach on the grounds of cost and because they felt it wouldn't enable Ireland to meet the renewables target.

Participants' main suggestions related to the management of developers – for example, only allowing community developers to put in place clean energy schemes, ensuring that developers contributed to local communities, and checking that developers are sympathetic to climate goals.

1.2.3. Attitudes towards the technology-led approach

Many participants were positive about this approach, but most did not see it as the only solution to meeting the 2030 target. Many participants supported the idea of underground cables and some thought that technology should play a role in climate change solutions.



Participants were concerned about the costs and technical difficulties of this approach.

Some suggested that the approach could pay dividends beyond 2030 and may ultimately represent better value for money if evaluated over a longer time frame.

1.2.4. Attitudes towards the demand-led approach

Participants were mainly very supportive of the demand-led approach but some added that it should be combined with one of the other proposals. There was clear support for the decentralisation of power and jobs away from Dublin and participants were vocal about their confidence in the approach being effective at reaching the 2030 target, while also being the cheapest.

Nevertheless, participants had concerns about moving high energy users to rural locations, and the lack of infrastructure available to support this model.

Participants suggested that local communities in rural areas should be given a greater voice in decision-making about the delivery of this approach.

1.3. Participants' feedback on engagement and consultation

Overall, participants taking part in the engagement activities were positive about their experience and pleased to be involved in a discussion that would have such a significant bearing on the country's future energy policy. Polls and surveys carried out at various stages indicated that the vast majority were impressed with how the events were run and the quality of information they were presented with.

However, many participants did feel that EirGrid needed to carry out further engagement, in particular with communities who might be impacted by future projects required in order to reach the renewables target.

In general, respondents to the consultation were positive about being able to contribute their views, but some respondents were critical of certain elements, such as the quality of the information provided, or the lack of publicity around the consultation.

1.4. Next steps

EirGrid will consider feedback from the consultation and engagement process before reviewing the planning scenarios used to develop the final roadmap for Shaping Our Electricity Future, which is due to be published in Autumn 2021. Participants have made clear throughout this process that they would like an increased level of engagement beyond this particular project and would like to see more public involvement in key decision-making about Ireland's energy future.



2. Introduction

2.1. Context

Since 2006, EirGrid has operated and developed the national high voltage electricity grid in Ireland. The grid moves wholesale power around the country by bringing energy from generation stations to heavy industry and high-tech users. The grid also supplies the distribution network operated by ESB Networks that powers every electricity customer in the country. EirGrid is a state-owned company and is independent from ESB.

When launching its 2020-25 strategy,¹ EirGrid set out a plan to work with partners and stakeholders to transform the power system in Ireland and the wholesale electricity market to enable at least 70% of electricity supply from renewable sources (referred to as the renewable ambition). That target has since become a legal obligation for the state as part of Ireland's National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030², which is Ireland's current contribution to the European Union's Clean Energy Package³. Ireland's program of government also reflects the EU's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2050.

The objective of Shaping Our Electricity Future is to determine how the grid must be redeveloped in order to manage 70% of Ireland's electricity coming from renewable sources by 2030.

In March 2021 EirGrid and the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan TD, launched a nationwide consultation and engagement programme on four approaches to achieving the renewable ambition. These approaches were as follows:

1. Generation-led: Government policy would influence where renewable energy is generated – favouring locations where the grid is already strong;
2. Developer-led: In this approach, EirGrid continue to connect new sources of renewable electricity as requested in any location;
3. Technology-led: This approach uses technical solutions to make the grid more resilient so it can better handle the variable nature of renewable energy; and
4. Demand-led: Government policy determines where large energy users locate in Ireland.

Following the consultation, EirGrid plan to publish the inaugural Shaping Our Electricity Future roadmap in Autumn 2021.

¹ <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/about/strategy-2025/>

² [gov.ie - Ireland's National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publications/2021-03-ireland-s-national-energy-and-climate-plan-2021-2030/)

³ https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/energy-strategy/clean-energy-all-europeans_en



The purpose of the roadmap is to advise and guide the Government, regulator, industry stakeholders and consumers on the optimal pathway to deliver their ultimate ambition for a renewables-based power system, while maintaining an affordable, secure, and reliable power system.

The roadmap will help identify the key initiatives required to reach the target of achieving 70% renewable energy by 2030.

Traverse, an independent consultancy, were commissioned by EirGrid to run a series of engagement activities at the same time as the consultation. The activities included a forum for industry representatives, a forum for civil society representatives, and a three-part deliberative dialogue with members of the public.

Traverse submitted interim reports on all three activities shortly after delivery, with details of attendance, an overview of feedback, and a summary of participant polling data.

2.2. Aims, objectives and scope

The consultation and engagement programme was intended to achieve the following objectives:

- Understand stakeholder views on and preferences for the four approaches.
- Understand what influences these views, including underlying assumptions, risk profiles for the proposals, and trade-offs that stakeholders make in gauging their preferences.

The engagement activities were designed to answer four key research questions.

- What do stakeholders think about the proposals for each workstream?
- Which proposals do they prefer, and why?
- What is the conditionality of their views?
- What values, motivators, and messaging influence their views, and how?



We want to...

Aim: To understand stakeholders' views on EirGrid's draft approaches for ensuring that at least 70% of Ireland's electricity comes from renewable sources by 2030.

To do that we need to...

Objectives

- Understand stakeholder views on and preferences for the draft approaches
- Understand what influences these views, including underlying assumptions, risk profiles for the different approaches, and trade-offs that stakeholders make in gauging their preferences.

So the full programme must be designed to answer...

Research questions

- What do stakeholders think about each approach?
- Which approach do they prefer, and why?
- What is the conditionality of their views? What values, motivators, and messaging influence their views, and how?

Research questions are what EirGrid wants to know – they may not be used directly, but they shape the questions put to participants

Consultation questions

Facilitation prompt questions

Additional questions to explore through analysis, to build into the narrative of the report...

- What are stakeholders' views on Ireland's renewable electricity target?
- Are stakeholders willing to pay more to achieve the renewable electricity target?
- What are stakeholders' views on different renewable electricity generation options and associated infrastructure?
- What are stakeholders' views on the decision-making roles and criteria for the siting of new renewable electricity?
- How would participants want to be engaged in any future grid development?
- How do participants think that communities and stakeholders should be engaged in any future grid development?

To have informed views, we think participants need to have information on...

- High level view of the climate change challenge.
- Description of what net zero is and the policy context of the targets.
- Current/potential energy sources, with a focus on clean electricity generation options.
- The energy landscape in Ireland now and in the future (i.e. demand and supply).
- What is the grid and how does it work.
- The role of energy generation in responding to climate change, and the implications for the grid.
- Roles, responsibilities, and authority across different organisations in the electricity landscape.

We will use the findings to...

Impact:

- Inform future development strategies for development of the transmission grid in Ireland.
- Inform and enable future communication and engagement on the development of the transmission grid in Ireland.

Figure 1: Agreed project framework for aims, objectives and research questions

In terms of scope, the focus of the engagement was on the 2030 renewable ambition and the ultimate target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050. We asked participants to explore the four draft approaches to ensuring a greater proportion of energy is produced from clean sources by 2030.

Participants were not assumed to have any prior knowledge and were given presentations by EirGrid to explain the background to the project and the



four approaches set out by EirGrid to achieve that goal.

Throughout the engagement process, participants discussed a wide range of subjects related to climate change and sustainability. We noted and reported on all comments but there was limited time to explore points that fell outside the scope of the project. There were however a number of suggestions which did not relate directly to EirGrid's four approaches and some of these will be considered in greater detail in the conclusion.

2.3. Engagement methodology

Traverse designed and delivered three distinct forms of engagement activities, which took place in April and May 2021.

2.3.1. Industry Forum

The Industry Forum was a Zoom webinar with stakeholders invited to register on the OpenConsult platform. The format allowed attendees to submit questions, and comment on and upvote questions that had been submitted. EirGrid presented on:

- electricity markets,
- system operations, and
- transmission networks.

After presenting each of the three topics, EirGrid took the questions from stakeholders which had received the most votes.

2.3.2. Civil Society Forum

Stakeholders from 84 different organisations registered for the event via Zoom. In total 92 attendees took part. The session was chaired by Marie Donnelly, Chair of the Climate Change Advisory Council. A presentation from EirGrid was followed by smaller group discussions.

Facilitators introduced the first activity, which involved recapping the four approaches using 'top trumps' cards. The cards ranked the four approaches against a number of different criteria (such as cost, technical difficulty etc.). They then invited discussion on how the different approaches compared.

Participants were then asked to allocate tokens to one or more of the four approaches to reflect their preferences (both as a group and as individuals). Facilitators explored the reasons for their preferences in the group discussion. The process of token allocation was a tool to open up deeper qualitative discussion, rather than collect quantitative data about preferences. More information about top trumps is provided in Appendix B.

2.3.3. Deliberative Dialogue

The dialogue was made up of three workshops across five days. The events were delivered via Zoom, with presentations in plenary (all participants in one room) and smaller group discussions in breakout rooms.

Before and between workshops, participants were asked to do small



activities (such as surveys and watching film clips) through an online platform (Padlet) to encourage further engagement and reflection.

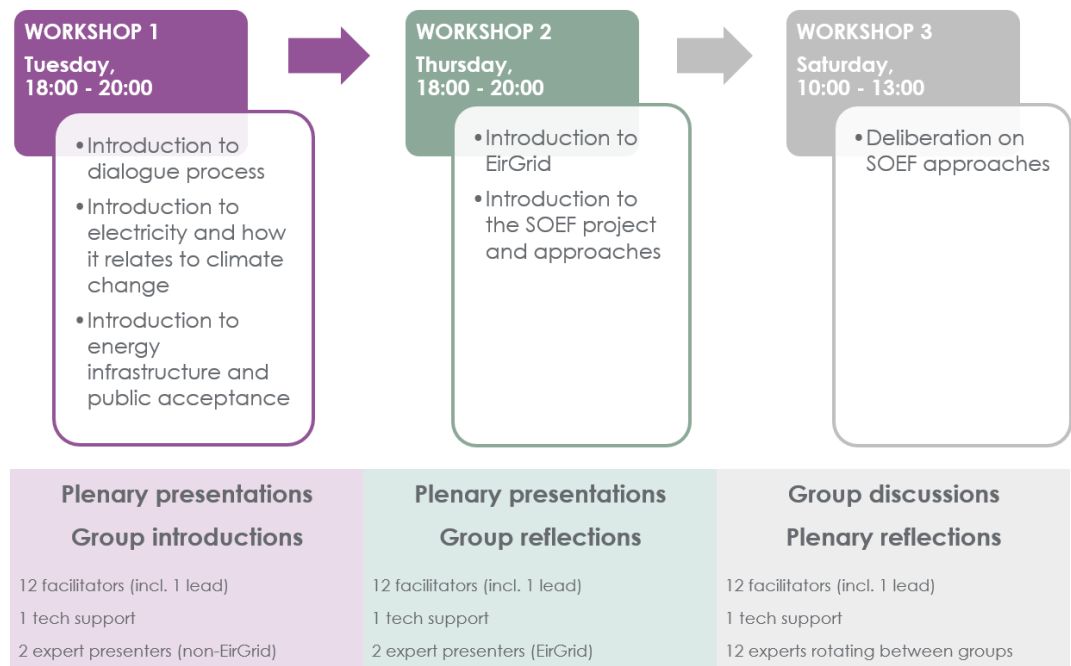


Figure 1: Process plan for the Deliberative Dialogue

Participants received a welcome pack before the workshops. This included a welcome letter and a few hard-copy materials to support active participation in the workshop activities. They were introduced to the online platform and asked to respond to key prompts and images on the Padlet board, related to climate change, net zero and the energy landscape.

The first workshop was focussed on climate change and the energy landscape. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions of the experts after each presentation, and joined the facilitated break-out groups for introductions and initial reflections on what they had heard. This was followed by activities on Padlet, reflecting on what they had learnt in the workshop. The external experts for this workshop were Brian Ó Gallachóir, Director of MaREI and John Curtis, Research Professor, ESRI.

In the second workshop participants were given an outline of why it is necessary to prepare the grid so that at least 70% of Ireland's electricity can come from renewable sources by 2030 and a detailed explanation of the four different approaches EirGrid are proposing in order to reach this target. The presentation included comparisons between the four draft approaches in relation to a number of different criteria. The EirGrid experts for this workshop were Liam Ryan, Chief Innovation and Planning Officer and Robbie Aherne, Head of Future Networks.

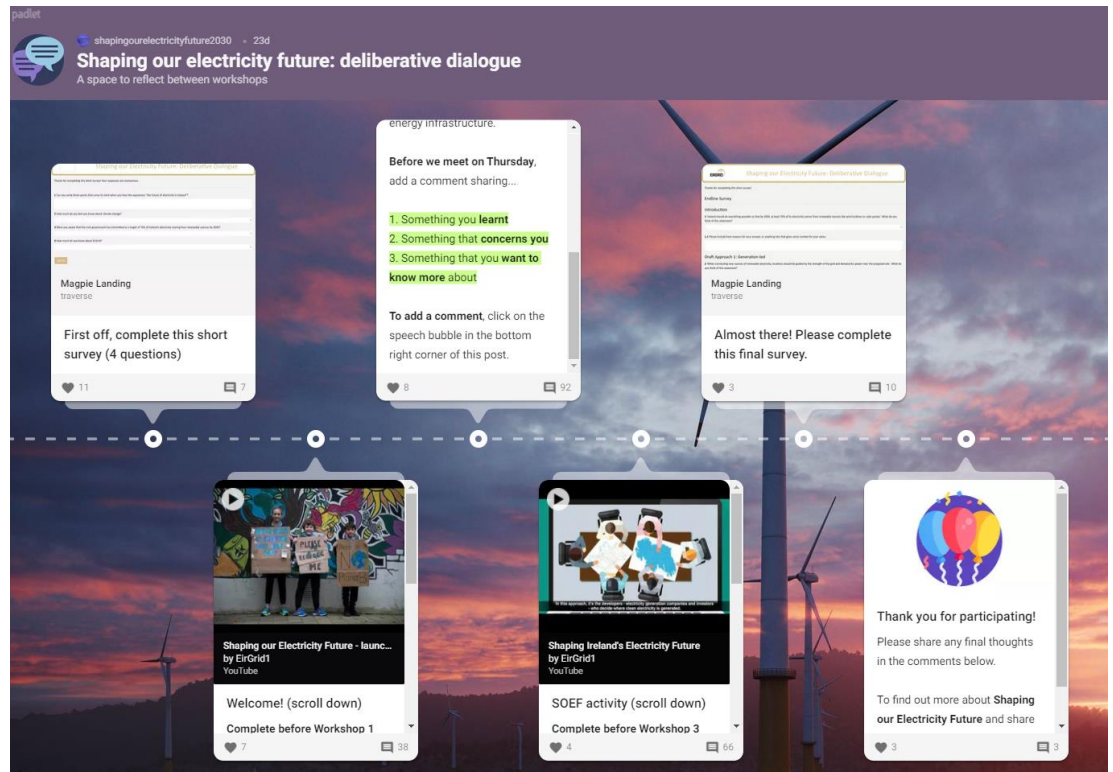


Figure 4: The online platform used by participants in the Deliberative Dialogue

Once again, participants were given an opportunity to ask questions after each presentation. Participants subsequently joined their break-out groups for a facilitated discussion of their initial responses to the Shaping Our Electricity project.

In the final workshop, participants joined their groups to prepare questions for the guest experts. Each group had an expert from EirGrid and at least one expert from another organisation, with twenty minutes provided for a Q&A session. The guest experts were from the following organisations: Chambers Ireland, Community Power, Department of Environment, Climate and communications, Friends of the Earth, Irish Rural Link, MaREI, and the National Youth Council of Ireland.

Using the same 'top trumps' game methodology as Civil Society Forum attendees, facilitators guided participants in allocating tokens to their preferred approach, individually and as a group, encouraging group deliberation on the perceived benefits and drawbacks of each approach.

Facilitators then guided participants in completing an opportunity statement for EirGrid in the following format: "We want EirGrid to prioritise _____ so that _____."

2.4. Consultation methodology

This report also summarises the responses to the consultation for the Shaping Our Electricity Future project. This consultation requested feedback on the four proposed approaches for reaching the target of at least 70% renewable sources by 2030. The consultation also sought feedback on the overall target, as well as general feedback on the project.



2.4.1. About the consultation

The consultation was open from 08 March to 14 June 2021.

The consultation was owned and managed by EirGrid Group. EirGrid commissioned Traverse to process, analyse and report on the responses received to the consultation.

EirGrid promoted the consultation through extensive earned and paid media on multiple channels.

2.4.2. Responses received

Four channels were provided for submission of responses to the consultation:

- **Online response form:** by using the consultation webform on the OpenConsult platform, accessible via the EirGrid website.
- **Email:** by emailing EirGrid's dedicated consultation email address, consult@eirgrid.ie, administered by the public engagement team at EirGrid.
- **Portal submission:** by using the portal function on the OpenConsult platform, allowing users to post public comments relating to part of the consultation document.
- **Postal submission:** A free post address was provided, providing the public with an offline means to making a submission. This was advertised widely.

The total number of responses received through each channel is provided in the table below.

Response type	Total number of responses received
Online response form	193
Emails	176
Portal submissions	58
TOTAL	427

2.4.3. Data processing

Submissions received were recorded in a database for analysis and categorised into types (for example letter, email or response form).

Data protection

Traverse and EirGrid agreed processes to ensure all data was handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The online response form included statements on data protection, including respondents' rights under GDPR, explaining how data would be used and for what purpose. Though respondents who provided views in other formats did not receive a data protection statement, care has been taken to ensure



that no individual respondents are identifiable in this report.

Development and use of the coding framework

In order to consistently analyse open text responses, Traverse developed a coding framework. An experienced analyst reviewed an early sample of responses and designed an initial framework of codes. The framework was then adapted as analysis of further responses was carried out to ensure it reflected the themes raised across all the responses.

Each code represents a particular issue and these are grouped according to unifying themes and sentiments. The coding was used to group together similar comments and summarise them thematically. In this way, the summary report draws on and reflects the responses received and the full range of issues raised by respondents, regardless of where in their response a respondent raises a given issue.

2.5. Reading this report

2.5.1. Engagement sections

Quantifiers

We do not report on numbers or percentages of participants as numeric quantifiers would be misleading given the engagement method. We use non-specific quantifiers to give relative weighting to qualitative data as follows:

- 'Most' or 'majority' when a clear majority of participants shared a similar view
- 'Some' when a minority of participants shared a similar view
- 'A few' when a small number of participants shared a similar view

Where multiple views on an issue are presented, more prominent views are generally reported first. We use terms such as 'consistent', 'frequent' 'commonly held', or 'less common', to show relative frequency of views.

Interpreting and extrapolating findings

Public dialogues are well respected as an approach for their ability to engage the public with complex policy issues in a meaningful and informed way. However, as with any research method, when interpreting the findings, it is important to bear in mind the potential limitations of the approach and how these have been mitigated.

- Recruitment processes can introduce bias, as people interested in a topic may be more likely to sign up and attend.
- Deliberative dialogues have a limited scope and time for participants to engage with the information. Out-of-scope topics brought up by participants could not be explored in-depth due to limited time, such as the use of nuclear power or production of hydrogen.
- The dialogue was a qualitative engagement exercise. The number of



participants and deliberative approach mean that findings should be considered illustrative, and are not statistically representative of public views. This is particularly relevant when considering any graphs and quantitative data.

- Any quantitative data in this report came from closed question surveys and polls. All topics were discussed in more depth during live workshops, where it became apparent that participant responses to surveys often came with caveats, meaning that the qualitative data gave a richer and more varied impression of participants' opinion than the quantitative data alone. We therefore analysed all quantitative data alongside the detailed qualitative data that we gathered. To grasp the complex narrative of the findings it is important to only consider quantitative data in conjunction with the detailed qualitative findings.
- As with all research, this report is a snapshot in time. People's views may change significantly in the future.

As part of the Shaping Our Electricity Future project, EirGrid undertook direct engagement with local authorities and other regional stakeholders. Purple blocks have been used to indicate where this engagement is summarised throughout the report.

2.5.2. Consultation sections

Quantifiers

In summarising the responses to open questions, the following quantifiers are used:

- A few – comments made by approximately 1 to 5 respondents.
- A small number – comments made by approximately 6 to 10 respondents.
- Some – comments made by approximately 11 to 20 respondents.
- Several – comments made by approximately 21 to 40 respondents.
- Many – comments made by more than 40 respondents.

These quantifiers are designed to provide a sense of the frequency with which issues have been raised in relation to other issues to give a sense of proportion and balance. This approach follows good practice in reporting qualitative data from open questions. Traverse's intention is to reflect accurately the range of issues raised, rather than to attribute weight to the number of respondents raising them.

The qualitative data provides useful insight into the preferences expressed by respondents in answering the closed questions, however it is important to bear in mind that a respondent may express support for a given approach, but also express concern about particular aspects of it, or express opposition to the approach, while recognising that there are benefits to it. As a result,



the quantifiers for the open questions may appear not to align exactly with the numbers in the charts summarising the closed question responses.

Interpolating and extrapolating findings

As the respondents to the consultation were self-selecting, their views cannot be taken to constitute those of a representative sample of the population. The views expressed are based on the beliefs, feelings and understanding of those responding. Nevertheless, the responses offer a valuable insight into views and opinions about the proposals even if these may not be factually accurate in some cases.



3. Perceptions of climate change and the pathway to net zero

Chapter summary:

- Participants taking part in the Deliberative Dialogue were concerned about the impact climate change would have on their lives. At the start of the process many were unclear about how Ireland was tackling the issue but were pleased with the progress being made. Most were supportive of the project as a means of moving to carbon neutrality but concerned about the costs for households.
- Civil Society Forum participants were equally focussed on the goal of decarbonisation, but many felt the journey needed to be part of a 'just transition' – they also wanted EirGrid to go beyond what was set out in the four draft approaches.

This chapter examines participants' attitudes to climate change and awareness of the journey to net zero, and their perceptions of Ireland's ambitions to achieve 70% of its electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030.

3.1. Attitudes to climate change

Nearly all of the participants involved across the three streams of engagement activities were aware of the threat posed by climate change and most acknowledged the need for swift action. Although awareness levels were high, some felt they had not been engaged fully in the conversation on the topic and so were not as aware as they wanted to be about the effect climate change and global warming would have on their own lives.

A few participants felt that it was a bigger priority for younger people and that often conversations on the topic (especially in the media) were directed at a younger audience. They said that they felt distanced from discussions around the environment and therefore had less idea about the measures required to combat climate change.

In the Deliberative Dialogue, some felt the language in general discourse around climate change was too emotive and pejorative, and that it would be easier to discuss environmental issues if the tone of the discussion were more neutral.

Although the general feeling was positive about tackling the climate crisis, there were a small number of participants who felt it was too late to respond or that any changes at an individual level would be insignificant in the long-term global context. However, based on comments throughout the deliberative process, most agreed there was a need to act now to avoid the worst affects, particularly for future generations.



3.2. Considerations around reaching net zero

Participants in the Deliberative Dialogue workshops had the opportunity to post comments before and after the workshops and presentations. At the start, some said they were aware of the need for decarbonisation but not familiar with the phrase 'net zero' or what was required to reach that target. Most felt their understanding of the concept had developed throughout the process, especially following expert presentations.

They felt it was important to achieve the EU's ambition of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and many of the participants in the dialogue were positively surprised by how much electricity on the network is currently produced from renewable sources and suggested Ireland could lead the way in Europe's pursuit of net zero. A few felt the target was not ambitious enough.

"Can we not do it quicker? If you are heading straight for zero, why not make it a shorter timeframe." – Deliberative Dialogue participant

Several participants commented that they felt a sense of national pride in the steps already being taken to combat the threat of climate change and thought this would stand Ireland in good stead for the challenges that lay ahead.

During the consultation period, EirGrid engaged with a range of regional stakeholders, including local authorities and regional Chambers of Commerce. There was a significant interest in how Ireland would exploit its natural resources to reach the renewables target. Stakeholders were keen to know more about the split between solar and wind power in the energy mix, as well as what localised plans would look like.

Many were concerned about the long-term sustainability of wind and solar power, given the unpredictability of the weather.

3.2.1. Cost

Participants involved in the deliberative discussions recognised that it would be a difficult transition to net zero. Their biggest area of concern related to cost.

Some expressed concerns about the financial impact on Ireland as a whole, but a greater number of comments focussed on the costs to each individual household. A smaller number of participants spoke specifically about the burden falling disproportionately in different areas of the country. For instance, some felt consumption in rural areas was likely to be significantly lower, given the concentration of data centres in urban and heavily



populated areas). There was a broad consensus that electricity bills would ultimately be higher if carbon emissions were to be reduced significantly over the next three decades.

Several participants noted the cost of switching to greener forms of energy in a domestic setting, through installation of solar panels and heat pumps and by changing to an electric or hybrid vehicle. Many felt adapting their lifestyle in this way would impose the most significant financial burden and some questioned the long-term efficiency of making major changes at a household level.

Participants welcomed the availability of government grants, and a small number felt this would ultimately provide economic benefits for individuals. Several felt the burden of paying for the changes would ultimately fall on the consumer.

Some of the concerns over costs were also linked to the wider context of changing and adapting infrastructure to support energy efficiency. Examples ranged from the need for electric charging points for cars to the cost of building new wind turbines.

3.2.2. Political context

Many participants in the deliberative process felt that the target of producing net zero emissions by 2050 could ultimately be replaced by a new target as it was subject to political decisions made at supranational level.

A small number of participants made specific reference to the Green Party and believed their role in government was key to Ireland meeting its ambitions. More widely, participants were concerned about whether changes to the composition of the national government could have an effect on policy.

For several participants, the issue was about trust in government, and more specifically about whether the machinery of government was agile enough to deliver major programmes. Some said they were sceptical because of past failures, mentioning fibre-optic broadband as an example of a large-scale rollout running behind schedule. Some participants also felt the process involved in drawing up new legislation could be a significant obstacle to progress.

3.2.3. Sustainability and energy efficiency

Despite concerns over cost, many participants in the dialogue said they were prepared to make lifestyle changes if it would help Ireland achieve its targets. However, there was some uncertainty over the long-term sustainability of certain changes. For instance, some participants expressed concern about the energy-efficiency of electric vehicles for shorter journeys, and others were concerned about the impacts of lithium-mining for electric vehicle batteries on developing countries.



“I was surprised and delighted to hear that at present 43% of our energy comes from renewables. While I knew that the supply of lithium is not unlimited I was concerned to hear about the damage mining of it can cause to the environment. The cost of converting homes to more efficient heating systems is something we have to be ahead of and ensure that the incentives are there for people to change in the near future and not when 2030 is on our doorstep.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant.

3.2.4. International context

Participants in both the Deliberative Dialogue and the Civil Society Forum noted that the ambition to be carbon-neutral applied across the EU but the measures required to achieve that target could affect Ireland disproportionately. A few commented that Ireland was a relatively small country and therefore unlikely to produce the same carbon footprint as other states in the EU and beyond. Participants felt the biggest polluters should be responsible for a greater share of the costs. This reflected a general sense of national pride that Ireland was going above and beyond and playing a key role in shaping the future of energy internationally.

Some participants mentioned Ireland's role in supplying and receiving electricity through interconnections with other countries. A few participants were concerned that this would bring more nuclear power into the energy mix while others felt Ireland could benefit economically by selling energy abroad.

3.2.5. COVID-19

Some Deliberative Dialogue participants felt the mission to reach net zero by 2050 should be looked at in the context of Ireland's emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic. A few participants felt that the country's recovery from the effects of the pandemic should be prioritised over long-term environmental considerations. This reflected a wider concern that the country had suffered considerable economic damage and would therefore be ill-equipped to face the challenge of reaching net zero.

Others noted lifestyle changes brought about by the pandemic, most notably the trend towards working from home. They felt this would have implications for domestic electricity consumption. An alternative view put forward was that the pandemic had demonstrated spirit in the face of adversity which would be valuable if Ireland is to meet its future obligations.

3.3. Perceptions of meeting the 70% renewables target by 2030

In terms of the target of producing 70% of electricity from renewable sources by 2030, many dialogue participants expressed views which were consistent with those put forward in relation to the net zero target. Participants generally felt it was achievable but would require trade-offs. Some did make a specific point about ensuring any solutions would be effective beyond 2030.



“I learned that a 70% renewable energy target by 2030 is a realistic target. This was a surprise to me. As someone approaching retirement in a country where we unfortunately already have to talk about energy poverty, the potential for increased energy costs is of concern. I would like to know more about the potential for wave and tidal power.” – Participant

Most participants were surprised to learn the extent to which agriculture contributed to carbon emissions. This led to some concern about the effect of any new measures on the farming industry. It also prompted discussion about whether a move to cleaner energy would have a disproportionate impact on rural areas of the country. More generally, participants expressed concerns about the impact felt across different regions and that this should be the focus for a just transition. Participants pointed out that public transport between different parts of the country was difficult and expensive, therefore increasing reliance on less energy-efficient forms of travel.

Most participants' views about meeting the 70% target were positive and there was particular focus on how Ireland could harness wind power to maximise the amount of renewable energy produced. These views were generally reinforced by information presented, in particular for Deliberative Dialogue participants.

Conversely, some participants raised several concerns about wind turbines. This included the number of wind farms required to meet the target; potential visual, noise and health impacts (particularly for onshore turbines); the cost; and need to import materials. This is examined in more detail in chapters 3-6 which consider attitudes to each of the four approaches.

A small number of participants in the dialogue suggested one issue with the renewable target was that it focussed purely on supply as opposed to demand. Many participants feared the number of data centres in and around Dublin would continue to rise. Some participants were of the view that this could increase reliance on fossil fuels, even if their proportion of the overall energy mix went down.

“My initial reaction is that it's a colossal undertaking. The cost is going to be huge.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

3.3.1. Community focus

Although facilitators did not ask attendees at the Civil Society Forum for their specific views on climate change or the journey to net zero a number did put forward suggestions for alternative approaches to ensuring the supply of electricity was cleaner in the future.

Some felt there should be consideration of the principle of community ownership of grid infrastructure and microgeneration. A few participants expressed interest in decentralising the grid and giving regions (particularly those impacted by infrastructure) more of a say.



A few participants mentioned a fifth possible approach, which would allow communities to play a role in determining where new developments would be built.

“It is about winning the hearts and the minds and bringing communities with you. Failing to do that means projects get stalled and everyone loses in that context. That is what is missing from the EirGrid strategy. The key point is winning hearts and minds and engaging more with the farming community and landowners. Bring them with you.” – Civil Society participant

Many Civil Society Forum participants felt that the approaches proposed by EirGrid lacked a focus on community engagement in a broader sense. They wanted to see greater evidence of a plan to include communities in key decisions over the next decade. Some felt this was particularly important in light of regional disparities. For instance, given that most renewable energy would be produced in the west of the country but demand would be highest in the east, a different approach would be required in those areas.

3.3.2. Looking further ahead

Several Civil Society Forum participants commented that the approaches did not take account of requirements for the grid and transmission infrastructure beyond 2030. This was reflected by some stakeholders suggesting the plans were simplistic or didn't give full consideration of the future energy mix. A few participants suggested developments relating to hydrogen and nuclear power should have been explored in more detail as part of Shaping Our Electricity Future.

“We need to look beyond 2030. It would be interesting to see which technology is being considered. Nuclear should be considered. It is important to have good understanding of what those technologies will be and assess everything out there.” – Civil Society Forum participant

3.4. Consultation feedback on renewables target

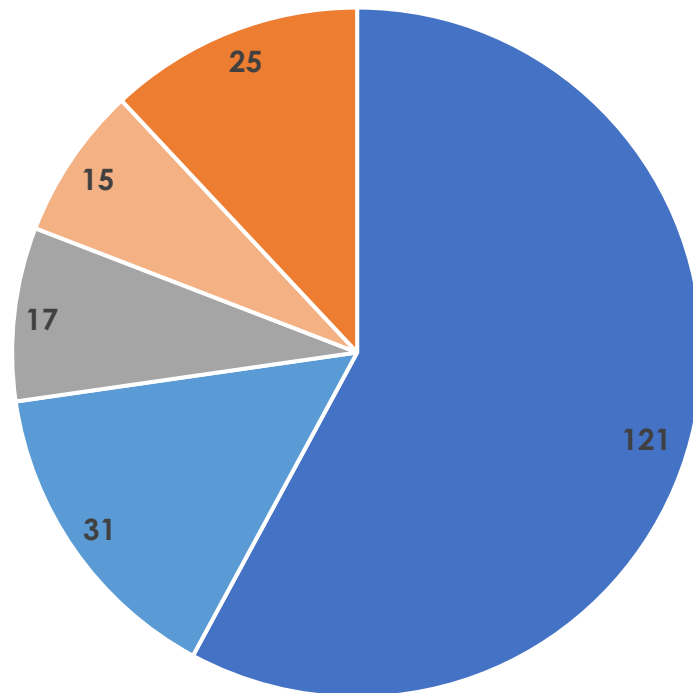
Question 1a of the consultation questionnaire asked respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement: *“Ireland should do everything possible so that by 2030, at least 70% of its electricity comes from renewable sources like wind turbines or solar panels”*.

Respondents were given a Likert scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', as well as 'don't know'.

This question received 209 responses; the breakdown is provided in the chart below.



"Ireland should do everything possible so that by 2030, at least 70% of its electricity comes from renewable sources like wind turbines or solar panels" (n=209)



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The linked open question 1b asked respondents to give the reasons for their answer, or to provide any other comment giving context for their views.

Question 1b received 168 responses, although some comments in responses such as emails that do not follow the structure of the questionnaire addressed this question and have been included in the summary below.

3.4.1. Support

Many of those who expressed a view on the renewables target said that they support the target. Several of these respondents indicated their support in general terms, saying that they agreed with the need to reach the target, while a similar number referred to the importance of reducing carbon emissions in the context of the climate crisis. Several respondents argued that Ireland has an opportunity to take advantage of its capacity to generate energy from renewable sources, sometimes adding that Ireland must “play its part” or show leadership in the clean energy sector.

Some respondents, including business representative organisations, claimed that it would be economically beneficial to the country to reach the target, saying that jobs would be created in low-carbon industries, including in rural areas that need further investment. A small number of respondents gave other reasons for their support, including the potential benefits of moving



away from fossil fuels and reaching energy security.

3.4.2. Concern

Many respondents expressed concern about the renewables target. The topic raised by the largest number of respondents was the potential impact of onshore wind on communities. These respondents said that wind turbines are noisy, that they represent the industrialisation of rural areas and that they can impact on the health of people who live nearby. A similar number of respondents said that onshore wind has a negative impact on the environment, as well as being visually intrusive; these respondents sometimes said that local biodiversity is damaged by onshore wind developments.

Several respondents said that renewable technologies are ineffective as a power source, or unreliable, requiring the continued use of power sources with a high base load. These respondents often referred to particular circumstances in which they believe that renewables would not be sufficient to meet demand, such as extreme weather events, or following the roll-out of electric vehicles, or on days with little sunshine and wind. A few of these respondents claimed that wind farms are environmentally unsustainable, saying that the production and transportation of the turbines produces carbon emissions, and that the blades become waste when they can no longer be used.

Some respondents were concerned about the cost of reaching the renewables target, saying that bills are already high and would likely become even more expensive. A small number of respondents said that the cost or burden of reaching the targets, for example hosting energy infrastructure in the locality, should be fairly distributed, with a few respondents saying that the public must be able to participate in decision-making about the energy infrastructure required to meet the target.

While some respondents believed that the target is too low, some said that it is too high, or seems like an arbitrary figure.

3.4.3. Suggestion

Many respondents offered suggestions on how to achieve the renewables target. Some of these respondents, including business representative organisations, called for further investment in the grid in order to make best use of the natural resources available. A few respondents said that the grid should be efficient, with as little environmental impact as possible, while a similar number suggest that there should be a greater emphasis on energy efficient business and domestic practices so as to reduce demand.

Regarding means of generating energy, some respondents commented on offshore wind, saying that it is the most appropriate source of renewable energy as there are no local communities impacted, while a small number favour use of nuclear energy, saying that it is safe, cheap and reliable. A few respondents suggested other forms of generation, including solar, biomass, pyrolysis, hydro, wave, and tidal power; a few users suggested use of



hydrogen as a fuel, or said that Ireland should invest in energy storage facilities.

A small number of respondents said that microgeneration has an important role in reaching the target, arguing that domestic and industrial users should be paid to feed into the grid, and saying that community-led generation could support local involvement in decision-making about the energy transition. A similar number suggested that there a range of considerations involved in this decision-making, including public participation and wellbeing, ecological conservation, and engineering feasibility.

3.5. Consultation feedback on Shaping Our Electricity Future generally

Question 6 of the consultation questionnaire asked respondents to provide any other feedback, or to give details on anything that respondents feel has not been considered.

This question received 336 responses, although this figure includes responses such as emails that do not follow the structure of the questionnaire, which were allocated to this question.

3.5.1. Support

Several respondents, including a range of stakeholder organisations, stated their support for the energy transition in general terms, sometimes with reference to the importance of national or regional targets or planning policy. A similar number of respondents, also including a range of stakeholder organisations, said that they support an approach that blends elements of more than one option. Of these respondents, only a small number offered a specific proposed combination, with generation-led being part of each combination proposed; demand-led was the next most frequently cited approach.

3.5.2. Considerations

Many respondents stated the considerations that they believe should be taken into account in deciding on and delivering the approach for reaching the renewables target.

Several respondents, mostly made up of stakeholder organisations, including public bodies, emphasised the need for long-term strategic planning. These respondents said that the approach taken should consider policies for regional development, environmental protection and economic growth in laying out a clear and energy-secure pathway to decarbonisation. Stakeholders referred to particular policies or processes that they say should be considered in developing a “whole government” approach, including Strategic Environmental Assessments, the National Planning Framework, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, the National Marine Planning Framework and Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan.

With regards to the development of the grid, several respondents, mostly



stakeholder organisations, said that further development is important in order to be able to make best use of renewable technologies. These respondents said that improvements to the transmission network are required throughout the country so that a stable supply of energy will be available, particularly in the context of the electrification of heat and transport.

Some respondents, mostly stakeholder organisations, emphasised the importance of the North South and Celtic Interconnectors in preparing the transmission system for further renewables generation, sometimes saying that further interconnectors with Britain and Europe may be necessary so as to buy and sell electricity effectively.

Some respondents, including county and regional public bodies, stated the importance of considering regional development in deciding on the approach to be taken. These respondents say that sustainable economic growth can be facilitated by the decision made about reaching the renewables target; these respondents often made reference to the natural resources available that could be used for renewable energy generation.

A consideration raised by several respondents is the facilitation of microgeneration. These respondents argued that the energy market should be changed so as to allow households, farms, businesses and communities to sell energy to the transmission system. Sometimes the respondents who raise this consideration said that microgeneration would facilitate the implementation of a smart grid, with a reduced need for grid development projects; other topics raised include the potential of microgeneration to foster a sense of community participation in the energy transition.

Some respondents claim that public support for the proposed approach is an important consideration in itself, saying that the public needs to be informed about the energy transition, and that local communities need to feel that their voices will be heard in decision-making about generation and transmission infrastructure.

Some respondents emphasised the importance of energy efficiency in reaching the renewables target, saying that domestic and industrial users must reduce consumption, particularly in the context of the electrification of heat and transport. These respondents often claimed that energy users would need to change their energy use practices so as to reduce demand, sometimes adding that appropriate technology could be used, such as smart meters or transmission technologies that can continuously balance supply and demand.

Some respondents argued that the use of energy storage was an important consideration in deciding on the approach to take to reach the renewables target, sometimes suggesting that electric vehicles or hydrogen generation could provide such storage. A similar number of respondents emphasised in general terms the need to choose an approach that will achieve the renewables target and prepare the way for achieving the 2050 target.



A small number of respondents, mostly stakeholder organisations, stated that energy security is an important consideration, including in periods of extreme weather; in some cases these respondents claim that there has been an increased number of amber alerts on the transmission system over the last year.

A similar number of respondents said that a well-designed market is a significant consideration in reaching the renewables target; some of these respondents provided technical details as to the features that they believe would ensure a flexible energy market.

A few respondents, mostly public and community stakeholders, said that the chosen approach should facilitate a just transition, with sustainable innovation and employment delivered in partnership with communities. A similar number of respondents said that compensation will need to be agreed with farmers and other landowners for any impacts on property as a result of infrastructure required for reaching the 2030 target.

A few respondents, mostly stakeholder organisations, said that the potential economic effects of the approach chosen to meet the renewables target should be considered. These respondents generally refer to the potential impact of generation or transmission infrastructure on the landscape, which may result in less tourism to the areas that host the infrastructure; other issues raised include a possible reduction in house prices, or reduction in Foreign Direct Investment if businesses such as data centres do not locate in Ireland.

Some respondents refer to the wider energy context, raising issues including: the need to align the decarbonisation of the energy system with the Paris Agreement; consideration of the use of anaerobic digestion in decarbonisation; and the need to plan for the electrification of heat and transport.

3.5.3. Concern

Many respondents expressed concern about how the chosen approach will be implemented. Where these concerns were the same as concerns raised in relation to the renewables target generally, as summarised above in 3.5.2, they are not repeated here.

Some respondents, including campaign groups, worried about how fairly the impacts and benefits of the project would be spread across the country, fearing for example that developers intent on making a profit would impact on the character of an area, or saying that particular areas have enough renewable infrastructure in place already.

Some respondents expressed concern about the energy usage of data centres, claiming that other sectors of the economy such as agriculture will have to reduce emissions, whereas the energy needs of data centres may mean that fossil fuel energy sources will continue to be used. These respondents sometimes said that Ireland is hosting more than its fair share of data centres, that they are not significant sources of employment, and that



their presence may make a just transition difficult due to higher energy prices.

A small number of users expressed concern about the legality or regulatory compliance of onshore wind developments, saying for example that such onshore wind has not been subject to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, and that the Wind Energy Development Guidelines are not useable.

Many respondents stated their opposition to specific infrastructure or development in their county or locality, including South Kilkenny, Laois, Offaly, North Leitrim, Meath, and in the Midlands generally. These respondents typically said that wind turbines or pylons impact, or would impact, on their area in terms of visual appearance, noise, and local biodiversity, claiming that the health and wellbeing of local people is damaged as a result. Often these respondents said that underground cables are preferable to pylons, and that offshore wind is preferable to onshore.

3.5.4. Suggestions

Some respondents, mostly stakeholder organisations, argued that new legislation or regulation will be needed on subjects including: environmental protection, siting of onshore and offshore renewables, and the transition to use of electric vehicles.

Several respondents suggested specific means of energy generation that they believe should be used in the delivery of the chosen approach, including: hydro, solar, nuclear, biomass, wave and tidal power, as well as use of hydrogen. Offshore wind was the renewable technology most often suggested, with a mixed group of stakeholders (public bodies, private organisations and campaign groups) encouraging its use.

A few respondents suggested that the number of data centres in Ireland should be limited.



4. Attitudes towards the generation-led approach

Chapter summary:

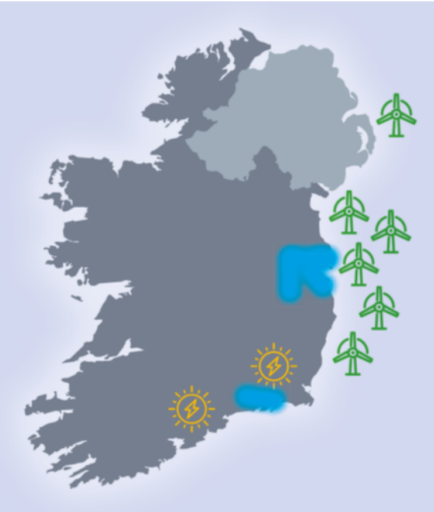
- There was qualified support for the generation-led approach, with engagement participants most commonly favouring it due to its **cost** and because it was seen as the **best chance to meet the 2030 targets**.
- Some participants saw **linking generation and demand as a benefit** both for practical reasons and because it is fairer for power to be generated where it is used. Participants regarded the emphasis on **offshore generation** and the **utilisation of existing infrastructure** as other advantages. Many consultation respondents also supported placing generation close to high demand, often because they favoured the use of offshore wind.
- However, some participants were concerned about the **geographical concentration involved** with this approach.
- Many consultation respondents argued that the transmission system needs to be improved so energy can be generated where resources are most abundant, and then transmitted to areas of high use.
- Some participants were also concerned about the environmental impacts of offshore power generation.
- The main suggestion made was to **combine the generation-led and demand-led approaches** as blending these would take advantage of the benefits of both while balancing out their downsides.

1

Generation-Led

Put clean electricity generation close to where most power is used

- Government policy would decide where new renewable electricity generators should go
- The strength of the existing grid and local demand would be considered when choosing locations
- Likely to lead to more offshore wind close to major cities, and less new onshore renewable electricity generation
- About 38 projects
 - 4.5 GW offshore wind (east coast)
 - 1 GW solar and inland wind





This chapter explores participants' attitudes to the generation-led approach. Participants in the Civil Society Forum and the Deliberative Dialogue workshops were given an extensive presentation by EirGrid on the detail of the proposal. Under the generation-led approach, government policy determines the optimal location for new renewable energy sources (RES).

In the Technical Report for the project, EirGrid have set out "that the high-level methodology is to assess the new RES pipeline and assign a higher priority to resources close to the major load or growth centres." Their objective behind this approach is to minimise the need to invest in new transmission infrastructure.

They believe that this approach means less onshore generation is required to achieve the renewable ambition by 2030. The generation-led approach assumes that 4.5 gigawatts (GW) of the renewable electricity target comes from offshore wind off the east coast. This will be supported by less than 1 GW of new solar energy and onshore wind farms.

EirGrid estimate this approach is a less expensive way to prepare the grid for 2030 targets. It would cost approximately €0.7 billion for related grid upgrades across the 38 projects.

4.1. Support for generation-led approach

There was support for the generation-led approach from many participants both in the Civil Society Forum and the Deliberative Dialogue. Participants who favoured this approach did so on the basis of cost, its ability to meet the 2030 targets, the relationship between generation and demand, the emphasis on offshore generation and security of supply.

4.1.1. Cost

Many participants who favoured the generation-led approach did on the grounds of cost. A couple of Deliberative Dialogue participants commented that it had the fewest number of projects of all the approaches. A few Deliberative Dialogue participants said they supported the lowest cost approach because they were concerned about the impact on their electricity bills.

4.1.2. Linking generation and demand

Some participants thought that linking electricity generation and demand was a key benefit of this approach. Participants said it "made sense" for generation to be located near Dublin because the majority of energy use is there. A few Civil Society Forum participants commented that data centres in the Dublin area were "big demand" customers and that their number is increasing.

A few participants pointed out some specific advantages to minimising the distance between generation and usage:

- Less infrastructure is required.



- There is less expense involved in moving electricity.
- Fewer emissions.

Some participants saw the benefits of the relationship between generation and demand in broader societal terms, arguing that it is fairer for infrastructure such as wind turbines to be situated in the areas which benefit from it.

“It makes no sense to have power generated in one part when it's needed in another part of the country. Why should people in Kerry have their view spoilt and then have big cables across the country. I think people should accept that if they're living in a place of high industry they may have generators around them and that needs to become the norm.” – Civil Society Forum participant

4.1.3. Offshore generation

Some participants who supported the generation-led approach were in favour of the emphasis on offshore generation. A number of these participants felt that offshore generation has a less negative environmental and visual impact. A few participants pointed out that there is less opposition to the construction of offshore than onshore projects.

A few participants thought this approach is particularly suited to offshore power generation because of the suitability of the eastern seaboard for wind and wave power. One Civil Society Forum participant claimed that most offshore development will be on the east coast in the next ten years because of the lack of planning permissions in other areas.

4.1.4. Utilising existing infrastructure

Some participants felt that utilising existing infrastructure was an advantage of this approach. They thought this made this approach quicker, easier and more cost-effective (“more bang for your buck” as a couple of Deliberative Dialogue participants put it).

“It makes the most sense, and it's the most justifiable, it builds off what we have already done.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

4.1.5. Security of supply and meeting 2030 targets

A few participants raised security of supply as another key benefit of this approach. One Civil Society Forum participant commented that large wind farms are more secure than smaller dispersed ones. Some participants felt that it was important that the electricity supply did not fail and one Deliberative Dialogue participant made the point that in 10 years' time we will be even more reliant on electricity, for instance because of electric vehicles.

Many participants who supported the generation-led approach did so because they thought it offered the best chance of meeting the 2030 targets. Participants commonly used terms such as “achievable” or “realistic”



to describe this approach.

“The generation-led approach is highly likely to result in a grid that will get 70% electricity from renewable sources, so that stands out. Is that not a no-brainer?” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

4.2. Concerns

The main concerns participants had about this approach related to the geographical concentration involved and the environmental impacts of offshore power generation.

4.2.1. Geographical concentration

When considering this particular approach, participants were most likely to raise concerns about the geographical concentration of energy generation in Dublin/the east coast. There were several elements to this:

- Some participants felt that patterns of demand could change, with people moving out of Dublin following changes in working practices due to Covid-19. One Deliberative Dialogue participant questioned what would happen if the West Coast becomes a hub as well.
- A few participants were concerned about the visual and environmental impact of wind turbines being concentrated in one area.
- A few participants thought power generation should be more spread out, with one Deliberative Dialogue participant warning against putting all your eggs in one basket.

“We need to split where we put these things in. People are moving out of Dublin, and we need power outside of Dublin. We tend to put all our eggs in one basket.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

4.2.2. Environmental impacts

Some participants had questions and concerns about the environmental impact of this approach, in particular how far offshore wind turbines would be and whether they would be visible from the coast. A couple described them as an “eyesore.” Others wanted to understand what impact wind farms would have on marine life and birds.

4.2.3. Achievability

There were a few concerns about how achievable this approach would be. A couple of participants thought that linking generation with demand could lead to difficulties in siting infrastructure in urban areas. A couple of others wondered whether offshore generation may be difficult to achieve.

4.2.4. Other drawbacks

Participants raised three other potential drawbacks of this approach:

- A few participants were concerned about the cost of offshore power generation or thought that it might be more expensive.



- A couple of participants noted that the generation-led demand approach would have less impact in terms of clean electricity and therefore wanted to see it combined with a demand-led approach.
- A couple of Civil Society Forum attendees made the point that that this approach does not support regional development.
- Echoing a theme heard throughout the engagement, one Civil Society Forum participant was concerned that micro-generation is not included as part of this approach.

"I would be astonished to hear that offshore could be delivered for the same price as onshore." – Civil Society Forum participant

4.3. Suggestions

The most common suggestion made by participants was to combine the generation-led and demand-led approaches. Participants who favoured combining the two approaches thought this would take advantage of the benefits of both while balancing out their downsides. Participants saw demand-led generation mitigating some of the drawbacks of generation-led demand because it allows more of a regional spread of generation and development, is more responsive to population change and offers cleaner energy.

"In terms of quality planning, demand-led, in terms of cost, generation-led is the best, but if you mix them, that's the best outcome." – Civil Society Forum participant

A few participants commented that a mixed approach was required rather than focusing on just one solution.

"I would go one coin for demand and one coin for generation. I think that the solution is going to be a mix, rather than one or the other, and they just strike me as the most balanced, the easiest to deliver on target." – Deliberative Dialogue participant.

One Civil Society Forum participant said they believed that EirGrid was leaning towards the two approaches and they therefore wanted to understand the implications of the interplay between them.

There were three other individual suggestions:

- One Civil Society Forum participant thought that this approach has to be 100% community led.
- One Civil Society Forum participant called for more marine protected sites.
- One Deliberative Dialogue participant said that the criteria used to measure this approach should also include community consent, economic benefits and equity, and the lowest environmental impact.

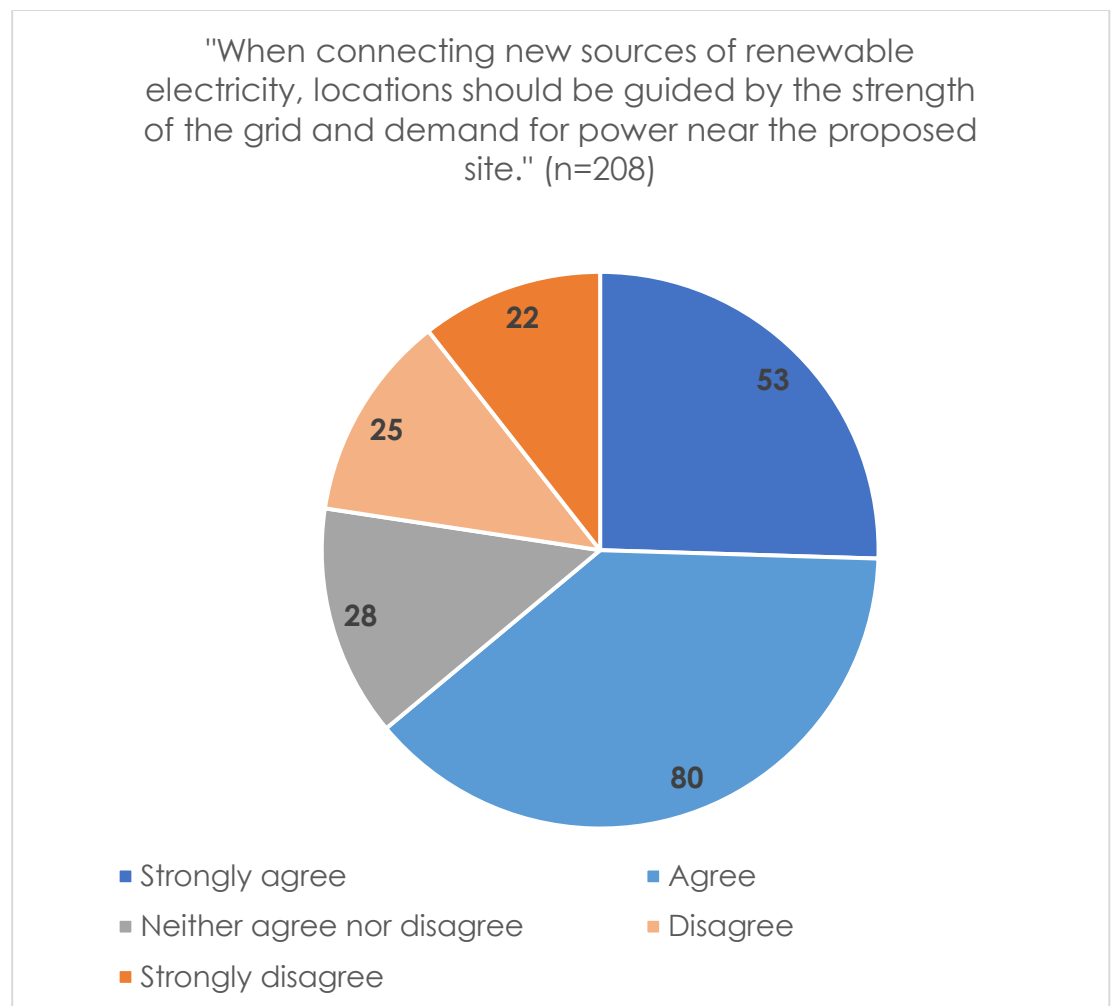


4.4. Consultation feedback on the generation-led approach

Question 2a of the consultation questionnaire asked respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "When connecting new sources of renewable electricity, locations should be guided by the strength of the grid and demand for power near the proposed site".

Respondents were given a Likert scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', as well as 'don't know'.

This question received 208 responses; the breakdown is provided in the chart below.



The linked open question 2b asked respondents to give the reasons for their answer, or to provide any other comment that gives some context for their views.

Question 2b received 152 responses, although some comments in responses such as emails that do not follow the structure of the questionnaire addressed this question and have been included in the summary below.

4.4.1. Support

Many respondents supported the generation-led approach, commonly saying that it would be sensible to put generation close to locations of high



demand, and often making clear their support for the use of offshore wind, in particular. These respondents included some small and large businesses, campaign organisations and public representatives.

Some respondents emphasised the efficiency of this approach, in their view, saying that less transmission infrastructure would be required, and that losses of energy in transmission would therefore be minimised. A similar number said that this approach is fairer, as it means that rural communities would not host energy infrastructure that would generate electricity for users elsewhere.

Some respondents, particularly from stakeholder organisations, said that the approach would be effective in reaching the renewables target, while a similar number said that it is a cost-effective approach.

Further potential benefits to this approach were identified by some respondents, particularly stakeholder organisations. These potential benefits included: the possibility for the approach to support regional development, for example in County Offaly or the Southern Region; improved air quality in cities; minimised environmental footprint; and minimised landscape impact, as turbines would be offshore.

Many respondents submitted identical text as part of a campaign; these respondents favoured the generation-led approach, saying that offshore wind can be sited close to areas of high demand, minimising the need for new or reinforced transmission infrastructure.

4.4.2. Concern

Many respondents expressed concern about the generation-led approach; several of these respondents, including business representative organisations, argued that the transmission system needs to be improved so that energy can be generated where resources are most abundant, and then transmitted to areas of high use. A similar number of respondents argued that a long-term strategic approach is required, one that considers future needs, as well as the capacity for development in different areas of the country. These respondents worried that this approach could lead to a lack of flexibility in the energy system, as generation would be overly focused on the east coast.

A few respondents worried that the concentration of generation development on the east coast would mean further development in a region that is already the most developed area of the State, while also potentially leading to under-investment in other regions.

A few stakeholder organisations queried the feasibility of offshore generation, claiming that it would have a higher cost, and that reliance on offshore generation might mean that the 2030 target would not be met. Stakeholders also claimed that there might be public, developer, and political opposition to this approach, with potential legal challenges and inhibited capacity for Foreign Direct Investment.



A small number of respondents said that energy generation should be located in the areas with the highest potential for generation, while a few argued that it is not appropriate for the State to instruct developers as to where generation should be sited. A few respondents said that the transmission system would need to be improved to deliver this approach.

As mentioned above, many respondents submitted text based on a campaign template; this text expressed concern about onshore wind, saying that there are only guidelines in place for developers, rather than legislation. These respondents added that use of multiple onshore wind farms would necessitate many costly modifications to the transmission infrastructure, as well as offering other criticisms of onshore wind, saying that it has a negative impact on nearby residents, the local economy and the environment.

4.4.3. Suggestions

Many respondents offered suggestions about the generation-led approach: some respondents asked for this approach to facilitate microgeneration, while a similar number say that offshore wind would be the technology most appropriate for use in this approach.

A few respondents suggested that remote areas would be most appropriate for hosting generation, while a similar number said that bills should be kept affordable. A few respondents asked for environmental impacts to be minimised, while a similar number express their support for use of particular generation technologies as part of this option, including solar, tidal, and nuclear power, as well as integrating hydrogen production with the transmission network.

A few stakeholders recommended the development of appropriate guidance and consent processes to facilitate this approach, with agreed Strategic Energy Zones for onshore wind.

A small number of respondents expressed a preference for use of this approach in combination with other approaches, sometimes specifying that this should be the lead approach.



5. Attitudes towards the developer-led approach

Chapter summary:

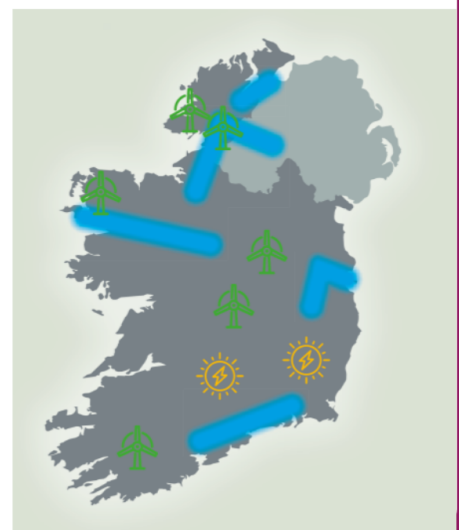
- Engagement participants were **less likely to support** the developer-led approach than other approaches. Participants who did favour it, often in conjunction with other approaches, thought there is a **need for developer finance and expertise** to meet the 2030 targets.
- Many consultation respondents who supported this approach, did so because they valued their expertise and welcomed further private investment.
- Many participants felt this approach was **the least preferable**, with some reacting in a strongly negative way. Some participants rejected the approach on the grounds of **cost and its ability to meet targets**.
- For some engagement participants and consultation respondents, a **distrust of developers** was a key factor. A few participants were also concerned about a lack of community input and control over future development.
- Participants' **main suggestions related to management of developers** – for example, only allowing community developers, ensuring that developers contributed to local communities, and checking that developers are sympathetic to climate goals.

2

Developer-Led

Let developers decide where to locate clean electricity generation

- New renewable electricity generators would be connected wherever developers ask for it
- Current approach
- Needs a lot of grid development, much of which cannot be delivered until many years after 2030
- Would create more electricity than we need
- More than 77 projects
 - 4 GW inland wind
 - 2 GW solar
 - 2 GW offshore wind





This chapter explores participants' attitudes to the developer-led approach, where developers decide where to locate clean electricity generation. This is the current policy for Ireland's electricity grid.

In their presentations, EirGrid explained that while developers can build enough generation to meet the demands of the 2030 target, it will not be possible to expand the grid in time for Ireland to use all of this power and to meet the 70% target.

EirGrid estimate that developer-led locations will need over 77 projects to add to or upgrade the grid. Their estimates are based on 4 GW of new renewable generation coming from onshore wind farms, 2 GW from solar, and 2 GW from offshore wind.

For reasons of safety and security of supply, there are practical limits to the number of major projects that can be undertaken at the same time. EirGrid therefore forecast that the necessary projects would not be completed for many years after 2030. The lack of capacity on the grid would mean that there would be excess power produced that can neither be exported nor used.

EirGrid believes this option would be expensive, estimating the likely cost to be €1.9 billion for grid upgrades and additions.

5.1. Support for developer-led approach

Participants were less inclined to support the developer-led approach than the other three approaches and did not challenge EirGrid's assessment that it would be expensive and not possible to deliver in time to meet the 2030 target. Participants who were in favour of it cited the need for investment to meet the 2030 goals and the value of developer expertise, although this was often in the context of combining this approach with others. A couple of participants commented that developers were needed beyond 2030.

5.1.1. Need for investment

Some participants argued that there was a need for developer financing in order to reach the capacity needed to meet the 2030 targets. They pointed to the scale of the task and the cost of infrastructure.

"The scale of the targets do require larger generation and billions of investment. We will need that investment. Not one or another – room for everybody." – Civil Society Forum participant

A couple of participants commented that developers already had existing plans in place, with one saying there were already thousands of solar farms in planning.

"The developers have loads already in train already, there are thousands of solar farms in planning. You have less chance of reaching the 2030 target if we take them out of the equation. They have a good chance of delivering." – Deliberative Dialogue participant



5.1.2. Developer expertise

The other main reason participants gave for supporting this approach was the expertise of developers in terms of infrastructure and land. A couple commented that EirGrid could learn from developers.

A few Deliberative Dialogue participants thought that a developer-led approach could result in new technologies and innovations.

“Developer led might be the one that bring new techniques and innovation rather than the technology.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

5.1.3. Other benefits

There were other reasons for supporting this approach which were named by a couple of participants in each instance:

- Projects would be located in the most efficient areas.
- Any excess energy produced could be sold to other countries (one Deliberative Dialogue participant described this as “a Norway model”).
- As this is the current approach, it would be less challenging than adopting others.
- This approach would deliver a greater amount of clean electricity generation, beyond 2030.

5.2. Concerns

For many participants, the developer-led approach was their least favoured option. Some spoke about it in strongly negative terms, for instance describing it as flawed, the worst option, or not an option. A few participants described their reactions in emotional terms such as being frightened, wary, worried, or not happy. One participant felt that major infrastructure projects should come under government control.

“Very frightened of the developer led route, a privatisation road. A project of this scale needs to be nationalised.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

5.2.1. Costs

Many participants rejected the developer-led approach on the basis of its cost, which was described as “very high.” Some Deliberative Dialogue participants felt the increased cost of developing new infrastructure could also result in a higher cost of electricity.

5.2.2. Ability to meet 2030 targets

Some participants ruled this approach out on the basis that, as an approach on its own, it would not enable meeting the 2030 targets. A few participants pointed out specific issues mentioned in the presentation such as the need for grid infrastructure, Ireland's planning system and the number of projects required.



“The system we have now is costly and won't achieve the commitments by 2030. It's what I least favour.” – Civil Society Forum participant

5.2.3. Lack of trust in developers

Some participants disliked this approach because they had negative views of developers. A few simply assumed that the arguments against developers are self-evident, with one Deliberative Dialogue participant referring to “the obvious reasons that we all know in Ireland.” A couple of participants cited the record of property developers and one Deliberative Dialogue participant said that they thought that “developer is a dirty word in Ireland at the moment.”

A number of participants spoke explicitly about trust being an issue. Trust in government was also mentioned but this sentiment was particularly strong in relation to developers, with some listing tax arrangements and the possibility of monopolies being formed as reasons to be concerned.

“I think for me the developer-led is the most negative of the approaches. I think experts should have more lead than developers.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

Some participants made the related point that developers are privately owned and motivated by profit. A few elaborated that this is a reason not to favour this approach because developers would put costs before other considerations.

“You can't leave this up to big companies who are just trying to make profit for themselves. You can't trust them on a big national plan like this.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

5.2.4. Lack of control

A few participants were concerned about handing control to developers, with one Deliberative Dialogue participant saying that the Government had less control and another describing the approach as ad hoc. A couple of participants pointed out that if the ownership of assets such as windfarms are in private hands, and they could be sold on or lead to a monopoly. One Deliberative Dialogue participant was particularly concerned about the developer-led approach being dependent on international funding.

A few participants were concerned that the developer-led approach would mean that communities would have projects imposed upon them.

“In relation to the developer led approach, there are times where communities feel a change is forced upon them. I think that could have major risks for the project.” – Civil Society Forum participant

5.3. Suggestions

Participants' suggestions on this approach related to the role of developers:

- A couple of Civil Society Forum participants proposed only allowing



community developers. One Civil Society Forum participant argued that acting as a community equates to becoming a developer, highlighting the concern raised throughout the engagement that community groups who are trying to produce sustainable energy are not able to connect to the grid.

- A couple of Deliberative Dialogue participants suggested vetting developers in some way to make sure they were sympathetic to the goals of tackling climate change. This reflected a wider feeling that there was less accountability for private developers.
- A couple of participants wanted to ensure that developers contributed to local communities, with one Civil Society Forum participant suggesting a fund for local communities and a Deliberative Dialogue participant proposed that local benefits such as employment, training of young people and facilities are included in any agreements.
- One Deliberative Dialogue participant suggested using a name such as expert instead of developer because “just the name developer gets people against it.”

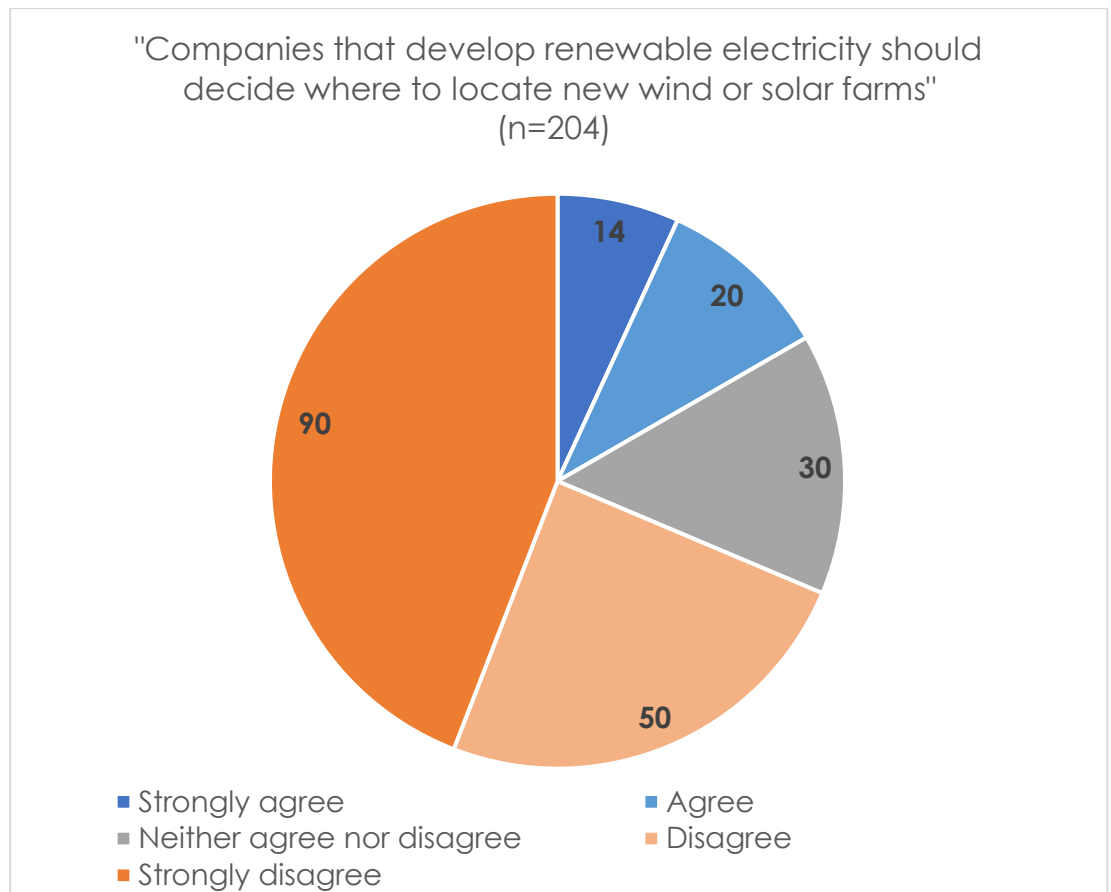
As discussed in section 6.3, a few participants thought that linking the developer-led and demand-led approaches would bring advantages. One Deliberative Dialogue participant suggested combining the developer-led approach with the generation-led approach to help deliver infrastructure in the Irish Sea.

5.4. Consultation feedback on the developer-led approach

Question 3a of the consultation questionnaire asked respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement: “*Companies that develop renewable electricity should decide where to locate new wind or solar farms*”.

Respondents were given a Likert scale from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’, as well as ‘don’t know’.

This question received 204 responses; the breakdown is provided in the chart below.



The linked open question 3b asked respondents to give the reasons for their answer, or to provide any other comment that gives some context for their views.

Question 3b received 165 responses, although some comments in responses such as emails that do not follow the structure of the questionnaire addressed this question and have been included in the summary below.

5.4.1. Support

Several respondents, including business representative organisations, supported the developer-led approach. Most of these respondents did so because they believe that developers have the necessary expertise, that developers' involvement would mean that there would be more private investment money available, and that it would be efficient to continue to use an approach that has delivered 40% renewables so far.

A few respondents supported this approach on the basis that communities or businesses can develop their own generation scheme.

5.4.2. Concern

Many respondents expressed concern about the developer-led approach, with the largest source of concern being the perception, which was raised by many respondents, that developers would be motivated by profit. Many respondents said that communities would be impacted by developers' decisions as to where to locate energy generation, claiming that local



residents' health and wellbeing would be put at risk, while a similar number say that the environment would be negatively affected by wind turbines, in terms of biodiversity as well as visual appearance.

Some respondents were concerned that there would be insufficient accountability if developers are able to choose their own sites, without appropriate local input into the decision-making, and a similar number fear that bills would be increased. Some respondents, including business and public representative bodies, claimed that this approach would not allow Ireland to reach the renewables target for 2030.

Regarding grid infrastructure, some respondents said that more connections would be necessary if this approach was implemented, while a small number of respondents were critical of the use of onshore wind as part of this approach, sometimes citing public opposition to such infrastructure.

A small number of respondents expressed opposition to use of renewables generally, or to use of wind generation specifically, while a few respondents claimed that developers would choose the cheapest sites, without regard for other considerations.

5.4.3. Suggestions

Many respondents offered suggestions about the developer-led approach: several respondents argue that a strategic approach is needed, with the government taking responsibility for deciding on the best locations for generation infrastructure so as to maximise the yield while also considering local requirements. A few stakeholders suggested a phased approach, whereby projects currently being planned can continue, including large-scale offshore projects, in order to ensure that private investment is continued, and that the renewables target is met.

Several respondents emphasised the importance of generation projects being carried out in accordance with the planning process, or a consultation process with nearby communities. A small number of respondents, including business representative organisations, claimed that grid upgrades would be needed to connect new renewables developments. A few respondents suggested that microgeneration could be facilitated through use of this approach.

A few respondents commented on the renewable technologies that could be used as part of this approach, suggesting use of solar, tidal or geothermal energy, or saying that large offshore wind projects would reduce the number of onshore wind projects required.

A few respondents suggested that this approach could be used in combination with other approaches



6. Attitudes towards the technology-led approach

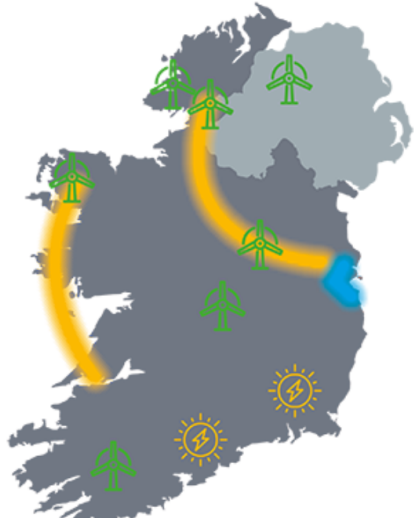
Chapter summary:

- While many engagement participants reacted positively to this approach, most did not see it as the only solution to meeting the 2030 targets. Many participants liked the idea of **underground cables** and some thought that **technology must play a role** in climate change solutions.
- Several consultation respondents supported this approach because it made sense to use innovative technology in the transmission system.
- Engagement participants and consultation respondents were concerned about the **costs** and **technical difficulties** involved with this approach.
- Participants most commonly **suggested evaluating this approach in a longer timescale than 2030** because they thought that it would become cheaper and easier to implement in the future and could be better in the longer term.

3 Technology-Led

Try new ways to move clean electricity across the country

- Use new ways to move electricity from the west coast (where renewables are) to the east coast (where demand is)
- Underground cables carry electricity
- Cables would not link to the rest of the grid, as they need large converter stations at each end
- Very hard to complete in time to achieve the 2030 target
- More than 46 projects
 - 4 GW inland wind
 - 2 GW solar
 - 2 GW offshore wind



This chapter explores participants' attitudes to the technology-led approach which involves trying new ways to move clean electricity across the country. Rather than putting generation near demand, or demand near generation, this approach considers innovative ways to move the power itself.

In their presentations, EirGrid described how this approach would use high-capacity underground direct-current (DC) cables to exclusively move power from wind and solar farms in the west of Ireland to east coast cities where



more power is needed. High-voltage DC cables are rarely used as part of any national electricity grid because DC electricity is hard to integrate with existing alternating current (AC) grid infrastructure. The DC cables would therefore be isolated, one-way connections between renewable generation and urban centres. To enable this approach, it would be necessary to install sophisticated electronic devices on existing AC lines to change how power flows on the rest of the grid.

EirGrid estimates this approach would require over 46 projects costing approximately €1.5 billion to upgrade and add to the grid. This draft approach is based on 4 GW of new renewable generation coming from onshore wind farms, 2 GW from solar, and 2 GW from offshore wind.

EirGrid believes that there is a high degree of technical uncertainty in the technology-led approach and that it is therefore unlikely to be possible to complete all the necessary work in time to make the grid ready for at least 70% clean electricity by 2030.

6.1. Support for technology-led approach

Many participants had positive views towards this approach because of the appeal of underground cables and a belief that technology should have a role to play in solutions to climate change. However only a few thought that it should be the only solution, with most who expressed support or qualified support seeing it as working alongside other approaches.

"That's where I think it would work, if it was running alongside [other options]." – Deliberative Dialogue participant

6.1.1. Infrastructure less visually intrusive

Many participants who favoured this approach thought that underground cables were a key advantage. They thought these were preferable to physical grid infrastructure, particularly pylons which a couple of people described as an eyesore.

"Putting cables underground I think is a brilliant idea." Deliberative Dialogue participant

6.1.2. The role of technology

Some participants who expressed support for this approach did so because they felt technology has a role to play in meeting climate targets. A few argued that it is important that there is investment in technology and innovation as part of any solution.

"I would be loath to discard technology-led, because of sustainability of the future. From my perspective, there are the Green Deal and climate neutrality targets and the role of technology allowing us to meet those targets." – Civil Society Forum participant

Others talked in positive terms about technological advancement, with a



couple commenting that technology can change rapidly. One Deliberative Dialogue participant made the point that there are leaders in technology in Ireland.

*"I think technology-led is definitely the way forward." –
Deliberative Dialogue participant*

6.1.3. Other benefits

There were a number of reasons for supporting this approach which were mentioned by a couple of participants in each instance:

- It would support micro-generation. One Civil Society Forum participant said it had the potential to bring more people onto the grid.
- It would make it easier to move electricity.
- It would mean building less infrastructure in the east of Ireland.

6.2. Concerns

Participants were most likely to raise as concerns the costs and technical difficulties involved with this approach. However, given that these were identified by EirGrid as prohibitive factors in their presentations, participants raised few additional objections.

6.2.1. Cost

Participants most commonly saw cost as a problem with this approach. A few mentioned underground cables in particular, with one Deliberative Dialogue participant describing these as "very very expensive". Another thought that issues such as planning relating to underground cables could drive costs out of control.

"Technology seems to be the more expensive, more troublesome one to do." – Civil Society Forum participant

6.2.2. Technical difficulty

Some participants also commented on the technical difficulty involved with this approach, with a couple saying they were not sure it would actually work.

"Not sure if it will work though, so looking long term in to future maybe. But currently no idea if it will work and it could be a failure." – Deliberative Dialogue participant

Again a few participants mentioned difficulties relating to underground cables. One Deliberative Dialogue participant pointed out that the large converter stations required for these cables are substantial buildings and another the disruption resulting from the need to dig up roads and land. One Civil Society Forum participant was concerned that wholesale transfer energy does not allow for system stability.



6.2.3. *Newer solutions*

A couple of participants commented that a disadvantage of this approach is that newer and better technologies may be developed.

6.3. *Suggestions*

Participants most commonly suggested this approach needed to be re-evaluated to capture benefits beyond the 2030 timeframe. A few argued that there is a need for investment beyond 2030 and this approach could be better in the long run. A few thought that the technology-led approach could be implemented more cheaply and easily in the future. For instance, one Civil Society Forum participant thought it was likely that there would be technical developments which would mitigate the difficulties of laying underground cables.

“It gets five stars for technical difficulty. That may be true in the limited case of 2030 but is surely untrue as we go towards 2050.” – Civil Society Forum participant

A few participants proposed expanding the remit of the technologies suggested in this approach, with a couple mentioning hydrogen technology. Individual participants made suggestions to incorporate broadband improvement, storage and a smart energy approach.

A couple of participants said they would like to see community-led technology be included in this approach, reiterating the call for micro-generation. This will be explored in more detail in the conclusion.

Finally, one Civil Society Forum participant said that there is the potential to fund this approach using European funding which could help mitigate the cost disadvantages.

6.4. *Consultation feedback on the technology-led approach*

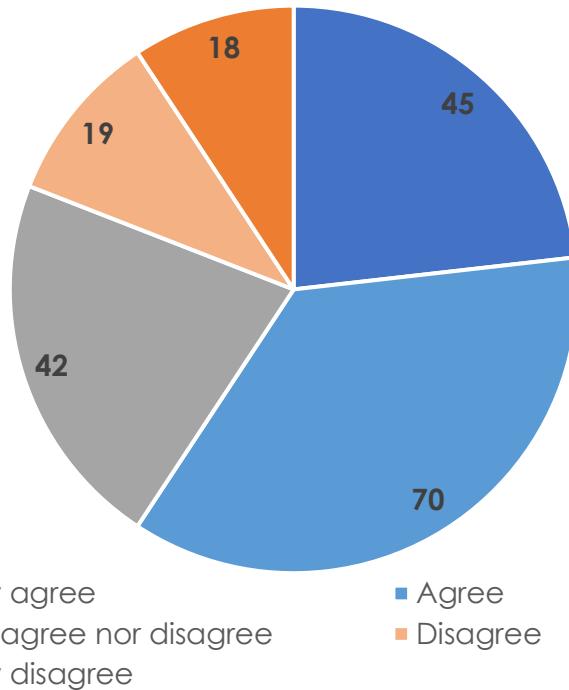
Question 4a of the consultation questionnaire asked respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement: *“Renewable electricity needs to be moved from remote locations to where most power is used. To achieve this, we should use new technology like high-voltage direct current underground cables”*.

Respondents were given a Likert scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', as well as 'don't know'.

This question received 194 responses; the breakdown is provided in the chart below.



"Renewable electricity needs to be moved from remote locations to where most power is used. To achieve this, we should use new technology like high-voltage direct current underground cables." (n=194)



The linked open question 4b asked respondents to give the reasons for their answer, or to provide any other comment that gives some context for their views.

Question 4b received 144 responses, although some comments in responses such as emails that do not follow the structure of the questionnaire addressed this question and have been included in the summary below.

6.4.1. Support

Many respondents expressed support for the technology-led approach, with several of them, including business representative organisations, saying that it makes sense to use innovative technology in the transmission system. Some respondents said that they support the use of underground cables. Claiming that there would be less environmental and social impacts as a result.

Other reasons given by smaller numbers of respondents for their support include: that the cost would be worthwhile in the long-term, that Ireland should lead in innovative technology, and that the technology would make the grid more flexible and reliable by facilitating generation in remote areas distant from energy consumers.

Another reason for supporting this approach given by a small number of business representative organisations, is the potential for this approach to support the development of a pan-European supergrid.



6.4.2. Concern

Many respondents expressed concern about the technology-led approach, with the largest source of concern being its cost. Some respondents said that rural communities would be impacted by the generating and transmission infrastructure necessitated by use of this approach, stating their belief that the health and wellbeing of local residents would be damaged. Similarly, some respondents worried about the impact that the delivery of this approach would have on the environment and landscape.

Some respondents expressed their concern that the technology-led approach might not be feasible, saying that it seems to be complex or uncertain, while a similar number explicitly doubt that the approach would be effective in allowing Ireland to reach the 2030 renewables target.

A few respondents opposed this approach in general terms, for example saying that they do not like it, or that they are against use of renewables, while others said that the approach is not needed, as people will leave Dublin to live in rural areas, and that current cables can transport energy effectively. A few respondents argued that this approach would lead to an unfair distribution of impacts, with people in urban areas benefitting from infrastructure placed in rural areas. A similar number claimed that use of this approach might mean that the safety and security of energy supply is reduced.

6.4.3. Suggestions

Many respondents offered suggestions about the technology-led approach. As with other approaches, some respondents said that the approach should facilitate microgeneration, or argued that specific types of generation, including offshore wind, solar and, to a lesser extent, nuclear, should be used in delivering this approach.

A small number of people claimed that this approach is not needed if generation is moved closer to demand, or the other way around. A few respondents called for the mitigation of any negative community or environmental impacts from this approach, while a similar number said that the cables should only be installed where there is a definite need.

Some business representative organisations suggested the creation of a HVDC link from Mayo to the east coast, in addition to the proposed link from Donegal to Dublin.

A small number of stakeholder organisations said that different forms of energy storage should be considered as part of this approach in order to develop a smart transmission system. A few respondents suggested that this approach should be utilised in a way that benefits regional development.

A small number of respondents suggested that this approach could be used in combination with other approaches.



7. Attitudes towards the demand-led approach

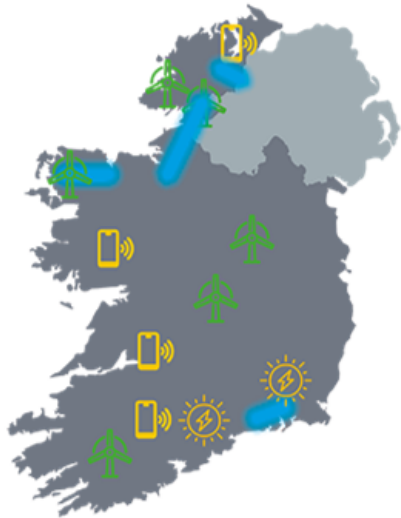
Chapter summary:

- Engagement participants were mainly very supportive of the demand-led approach, however, a high number of participants offered their support to this method on condition it was combined with one of the other proposals. There was a clear endorsement for the **decentralisation** of power and jobs away from Dublin and participants were vocal about their confidence in the approach **hitting targets by 2030**, while also being the **cheapest**.
- Many consultation respondents believed this approach would facilitate development and job opportunities outside of Dublin.
- Engagement participants had concerns surrounding the **demand** from industries to move to rural locations, whether there was a sufficient **benefit pay-off** and the lack of **infrastructure** available to support this model.
- Some consultation respondents felt the approach would be difficult to implement.
- Suggestions from engagement participants included giving a greater voice and consideration to **local communities** in rural locations and giving more thought to the **practicality** of the demand-led approach.

4 Demand-Led

Put large electricity users close to sources of clean electricity generation

- Government policy would decide where large-scale electricity users (like data centres) should go
- These users could use a quarter of all grid electricity by 2030
- New users would be closer to renewable electricity sources, where the grid is strong
- Relies on users accepting the approach
- More than 41 projects
 - 4 GW inland wind
 - 2 GW solar
 - 2 GW offshore wind



This chapter explores participants' attitudes to the demand-led approach which involves changing government policy to move high-demand users closer to the sources of clean power. In order to make the most of existing grid infrastructure, these users would be sited near major towns and cities in



the west of Ireland.

In their presentations, EirGrid described how this approach would develop 4GW of new onshore wind farms, 2 GW of solar farms, and 2 GW of offshore wind. They also stressed that this approach is one of the least expensive and estimated that it would lead to approximately 41 projects to upgrade or add to the grid at a cost of more than €0.5 billion.

EirGrid emphasised, however, that this approach would require a change in government and regulatory policy and that would also involve large electricity users relocating to the preferred regions of the grid going forward.

7.1. Support for demand-led approach

In both the Civil Society Forum and public dialogue groups, participants raised four key points in relation to support for the demand-led approach; decentralisation, a mix of demand-led and another approach, the chance of success and cost. It should be noted that the latter two points were discussed at much greater length by those in the Deliberative Dialogue group while the first two were highlighted by participants in both groups.

7.1.1. Decentralisation

Participants in both the Civil Society Forum and the deliberative workshops focused to a large extent on the idea of decentralising power and jobs away from Dublin. Almost half gave this as a reason for their support for the demand-led approach. Participant discussions surrounding this focussed on moving jobs and people out of Dublin and creating opportunities elsewhere around Ireland. Some stated that this could be of great benefit to rural communities in the west, while others suggested that people need a reason to move out of the capital.

"If you move people, industry will move there, because that is where workers would be. To keep rural communities alive, we need more people staying in these areas, rather than moving out."

– Civil Society Forum participant

Many people spoke from personal experience of living in rural Ireland and highlighted the benefit that the demand-led approach would have on their communities, while others explained that they were required to move to Dublin for a job due to the lack of decent opportunity elsewhere in the country. Overall, the prospect of enticing people and jobs out of Dublin was extremely popular with respondents across both groups. Many participants detailed their belief that other areas of the country had potential that was not being exploited due to the consistent focus on the capital.

Furthermore, whilst some argued that there was too much focus on Dublin and that opportunities should be more evenly distributed, others opted to discuss the release of pressure that Dublin would benefit from if the demand-led approach was adopted. This was a concept that was discussed mainly by participants in the public dialogue group.



Some of the local authorities and regional stakeholders with whom EirGrid engaged with were interested in the possibility of moving data centres from one part of the country to another. Some suggested this would increase opportunities for employment and investment, reducing regional disparities in the process.

However, some of the stakeholders were concerned about whether the grid would be flexible enough to allow large-scale electricity users to move from east to west or from urban to more rural areas. Some expressed frustrations around planning restrictions which they felt would mean that data centres could not be housed in certain areas. A few wanted more information about what benefits there might be for local communities.

7.1.2. Mix of approaches

Participants in both groups also discussed the possibility of a mix between demand-led and another of the four potential approaches. The most common mix was between demand-led and generation-led, with the majority of respondents suggesting that a combination of both of these approaches would be most suitable to tackle the issue. Many participants suggested that this mix would be most likely to succeed in the long term and have a clear potential to be linked together into one comprehensive approach.

“I would put one coin on generation- led and demand- led and pretty much because it’s more achievable and also because we should divide across the country. I feel local hubs would be the way to go.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

There were also other combinations of the approaches suggested, although they were given less prominence than the demand/generation combination. The mix of these two methods were particularly favoured by the public dialogue group. Participants in the Civil Society Forum suggested there is an inherent link between the developer and demand-led approaches.

“Large users could be very substantial in the next 10 years, having that combined with developer-led, you’re still accepting that developer-led generation is a coordinated approach to demand growth arising. As we heard the costs of it in the time period, whether you like it or not, it’s very difficult to deliver the expansion required. Some sort of mix between them, elements of the technology complementing the bottlenecks that might still exist in that model.” – Civil Society Forum participant

The two combinations that were discussed by participants in the public dialogue group were the demand/generation mix, as referred to above,



and a demand/technology-led mix.

7.1.3. Cost

This was a major discussion point for participants in the public dialogue group. Participants thought that the demand-led approach would be the cheapest option of the four potential methods, which reflected the information presented to them by EirGrid.

Some of the participants discussed the cheaper cost implications of setting up this approach as being more important than the initiative hitting the 2030 targets, while others were more focussed on the affordability of energy as a whole under the demand-led method.

“I have electricity, I run my house on gas and my car runs on diesel but in 10 years' time I am going to be running everything on electricity. Cost is the next important – I have to be able to afford it. Costs are being borne by the consumer. It is important that in 10 years' time people are not paying 20-30% of their income on electricity.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

A few participants talked about potential trade-offs and weighing up of contrasting benefits, specifically in relation to cost. One participant in particular highlighted that, whilst a specific method may be costly, the long-term benefits will make it worthwhile.

“While there is a large difference between the projected costs this will be a long-term project and the returns will greatly justify the costs so I don't think this is a major factor.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

7.1.4. Chance of Success

Most participants felt that the demand-led approach had the highest chance of hitting the energy targets by the proposed deadline.

“I think it ticks all the boxes as it provides actual green energy by 2030.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

Deliberative Dialogue participants felt the demand-led method was the most likely to succeed and some said they were influenced by the information provided by the expert speakers.

“I am going to go with demand led. After listening to John and Patrick speaking about how technology has changed.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

The fact that the chance of success was solely discussed by public dialogue participants is potentially due to the deliberative methods used in the discussions with this group. Whilst the respondents from the Civil Society Forum came to the session with a greater level of prior knowledge, the public dialogue participants were shaping their views and learning throughout the process and may have therefore been more susceptible to suggestions by



the expert speakers.

7.2. Concerns

While participants were supportive of the demand-led approach, they did raise a number of concerns, namely: the demand for such an initiative, the benefit payoff and infrastructure.

7.2.1. Demand

There was significant discussion across both groups about the desire for people to relocate. Many participants suggested that, despite the support for a move away from Dublin many people would not want to leave the capital and, therefore, a move to rural areas around the west coast would be counterproductive. Furthermore, there were concerns around forcing big companies to move to rural areas,

Others discussed demand in a more holistic manner, with more focus on defining the idea of demand in the context of the initiative.

“If you look at demand led, the problem is how do we define demand? we know in the west of Ireland the kind of electricity available is second tier, you have less types of industry that are available. If the demand is simply putting big data centres in the middle of nowhere. Defining demand is the problem. If I could have demand defined, I would be very happy.” – Civil Society Forum participant

Although this theme was discussed across both groups, the public sector responses seemed to have a higher focus on the demand for energy in rural Ireland whilst the public dialogue group were more concerned about the public and their desire to stay in Dublin. Both groups discussed difficulties surrounding moving larger companies across the country.

7.2.2. Effect of moving high-demand users

Civil Society Forum participants discussed whether moving companies would have a negative effect on rural communities due to the disregard for the area. This was also discussed to some extent within the public dialogue group.

“I was initially going toward demand led, but now I’m thinking that there isn’t a huge incentive to moving these data centres out west. They want to be near Dublin, and if there is no benefit to the communities then I don’t know why we’d do it.” – Civil Society Forum participant

Several Deliberative Dialogue participants felt moving jobs away from big cities would have a negative impact. Participants discussed “pulling” jobs from cities and the potential loss of investors if the demand-led approach was adopted.



7.2.3. Infrastructure

Lastly, there were concerns from participants over the infrastructure required in the demand-led approach. Both Civil Society Forum and public dialogue participants discussed timescales, facilities for big companies and the general need for infrastructure in this approach.

“In number 1, we're putting the turbine by the factory and in 4 we're putting the factory by the turbine, so why does 4 need so much more infrastructure?” – Civil Society Forum participant

Participants in the Civil Society Forum spoke more explicitly around the general need for infrastructure for companies in rural areas, with some speaking from previous experience and others questioning the capacity of the grid to expand to accommodate the demand-led approach. In addition, they raised concerns about the logistics of developing the infrastructure needed, such as cost, planning permission. They were more sceptical than public dialogue participants that policy could be easily changed.

7.3. Suggestions

There were also two main themes that were discussed when participants were given the opportunity to make suggestions; community importance and practicality.

7.3.1. Community Importance

Both groups suggested the importance of community should be factored in by EirGrid, both in terms of community wellbeing and benefit but also in ensuring the local residents “get a say” in the work being carried out and taking a collaborative approach to plans. The Civil Society Forum focussed on a community buy-in model, whereas public dialogue participants were more focussed on involvement of communities and also discussed pricing within this theme, in the sense that increasing energy prices will negatively affect communities, and the creation of jobs.

“They wouldn't bring in a lot of permanent jobs - if 27% of our usage is data centres, it's still not going to bring in a lot of work. You're not really adding to a community long term. It's quite disappointing.” – Deliberative dialogue participant

7.3.2. Practicality

Participants in the deliberative workshops suggested it could be more practical and cost-effective for companies to be moved to rural areas in the long term.

“If big business are going to move, there has to be schools, buses and infrastructure.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant

In the Civil Society Forum practicality was considered in a variety of different ways. Some believed that the demand-led method was not practical at all,



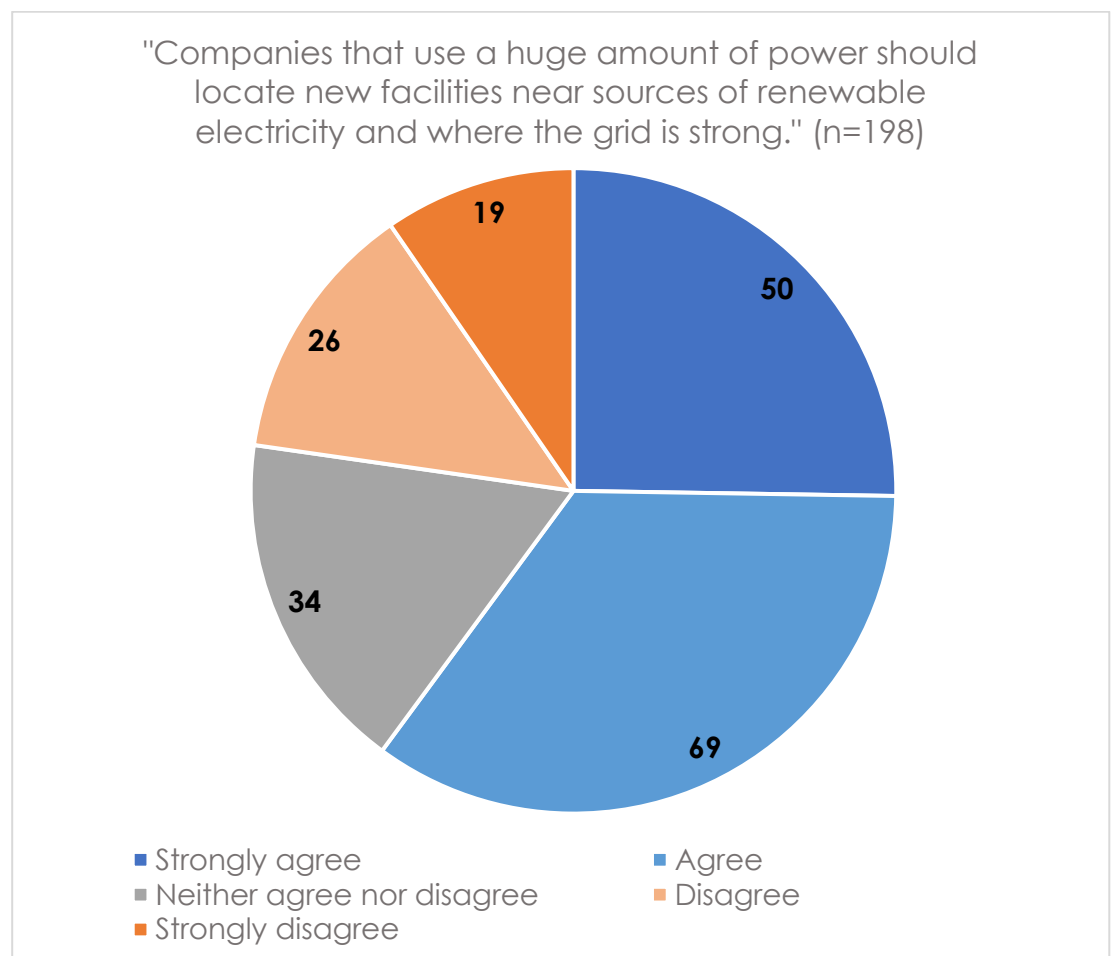
while others focussed on heat and transport costs and need for different businesses and sectors to consume energy in a more sustainable way.

7.4. Consultation feedback on the demand-led approach

Question 5a of the consultation questionnaire asked respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement: “Companies that use a huge amount of power should locate new facilities near sources of renewable electricity and where the grid is strong”.

Respondents were given a Likert scale from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’, as well as ‘don’t know’.

This question received 198 responses; the breakdown is provided in the chart below.



The linked open question 5b asked respondents to give the reasons for their answer, or to provide any other comment that gives some context for their views.

Question 5b received 150 responses, although some comments in responses such as emails that do not follow the structure of the questionnaire addressed this question and have been included in the summary below.



7.4.1. Support

Many respondents expressed support for the demand-led approach, several of whom indicate their support in general terms saying, for example, that the approach is sensible. A similar number said that the approach would facilitate development, including employment opportunities, outside of the Dublin area.

Some respondents said that the approach would lead to increased energy efficiency, as energy loss during transmission would be minimised, while a similar number say that they support the approach on the grounds of its lower cost.

A few stakeholders from the West of Ireland claim that this approach is aligned with the governmental policy on future energy and regional development. Potential benefits raised by a few respondents include: economic growth, leading to higher tax-take; flexibility in decision-making as to appropriate locations for development, including the consideration of environmental factors; and the alleviation of constraints on the east coast.

7.4.2. Concern

Many respondents expressed concern about the demand-led approach, several of whom feel that this approach would not be viable, or would be difficult to implement. Some respondents specifically stated that companies may be unable or unwilling to locate themselves in more remote areas, while a similar number worried about the impact on the environment and landscape if companies were to be sited in rural areas.

Concerns raised by a few respondents include: that this approach would be costly, that it would be bad for the economy by discouraging foreign direct investment, that grid reliability would be preferable, and that the number of data centres should be limited or that the power they use should not be taken away from other users.

A few respondents gave their concerns regarding the effectiveness of the approach in achieving the 2030 renewables target, saying that: the approach would make achieving the target more complex; the approach might help in achieving the 2030 target, but wouldn't be a basis for further progress towards the 2050 target; Ireland would be unable to achieve its offshore ambition under this approach; and that large energy users might require more fossil fuel generation, representing a barrier to the 2030 target.

7.4.3. Suggestions

Many respondents offered suggestions about the demand-led approach. Several respondents said that large companies should host their own generation infrastructure, or otherwise suggest that microgeneration, including with energy storage, should play a role in the delivery of this approach. Some respondents, including business representative organisations, believed that there is a need for appropriate government



policy and regulation to support this approach. A small number of respondents, mostly made up of business representative organisations, also suggested that state agencies such as the IDA and Enterprise Ireland should liaise with the companies concerned to ensure the successful roll-out of the approach.

Some respondents, including stakeholder organisations, said that there should be a strategic approach to the siting of large users, taking local needs and planning context into account, as well as the infrastructure requirements of the large users, such as water supply, cross-Atlantic cables, and adequate stand-by energy supply, for example by extending the gas transmission system. A few County Councils and business representative organisations referred to specific areas of the country where developments could be hosted, if this approach was implemented, including Counties Offaly, Cork, Limerick, and the west coast more broadly.

Some respondents said that this approach makes particular sense for data centres, while a small number of respondents argued that big users should pay more for their energy or should pay for the cost of grid developments undertaken to meet their needs.

A small number of respondents argued that this approach should make greater use of offshore generation, including off the west coast. A few respondents said that this approach could also be used for large public services, including electrified to ensure a constant supply of electricity, including in the context of electrified transport.

A few respondents suggested that this approach could be used in combination with other approaches, particularly the generation-led approach.



8. Engagement and Consultation processes

The section examines participants' views of the engagement activities organised as part of Shaping Our Electricity Future, as well as the consultation undertaken. It considers the information presented to Civil Society and Industry Forum representatives as well as participants in the Deliberative Dialogue. It will also look at feedback on the presentations and other engagement activities.

8.1. Support for the engagement process

The majority of all those involved across the engagement activities welcomed the opportunities to participate in the discussions. In general terms, comments about the management of events and the personnel involved were highly complimentary.

One Deliberative Dialogue participant was particularly impressed with the transparent approach of EirGrid and said "my mind had been put at ease" by the information shared about the project.

A few Deliberative Dialogue participants praised the 'simple language' used to describe the different approaches.

"It is really positive to see EirGrid taking such steps to engage public and stakeholders." – Deliberative Dialogue participant

A number of Civil Society Forum attendees were also pleased to have the opportunity to take part in the discussions and to meet other stakeholders to consider the different approaches to reaching the target of 70% renewable energy by 2030.

"It is great to see EirGrid reach out and communicate with the public. Long may government learn to expand on this process." – Civil Society Forum participant

8.1.1. Need for further engagement

While many were positive about the activities, they stressed the need for EirGrid to continue engaging beyond the consultation and engagement phase of Shaping Our Electricity Future.

One Civil Society Forum participant said that EirGrid should formulate a plan for engaging from now until 2030, reflecting that participation in the forum had been a "really positive process" and that it would be beneficial for all stakeholders to be involved in the future.

A number of Deliberative Dialogue participants were also keen for further involvement and felt that more discussion was needed before a definitive course of action was taken.

"I want to hear more about each of the options and their potential for being delivered by 2030. I feel like we are only scratching the surface." – Deliberative Dialogue participant



A number of regional stakeholders who met with EirGrid during the consultation phase commented that engagement with local communities on projects in the past had been poor. Many felt that the level of engagement had improved and were pleased to be part of the discussion on Shaping Our Electricity Future. Stakeholders said that good communication at the community level was essential, whichever approach EirGrid decided to follow. For some, this meant talking about regional benefits and job opportunities and taking feedback from those impacted by development.

8.2. Concerns around engagement

Participants expressed concern about a number of different areas relating to the engagement process for Shaping Our Electricity Future. Most of these related to the four proposed approaches for reaching the renewable target.

8.2.1. Information too technical or misleading

Several participants in the Deliberative Dialogue felt the presentations were too technical or jargonistic, although the majority were impressed with the overall content. A few considered there to be too much information to easily digest within the time available. One participant described the presentations in the deliberative workshops as “educational” but felt there was too much to take in. Another felt the information was too simplistic and shouldn’t have been boiled down to four single approaches.

Some participants thought the information was misleading. A few felt it was skewed towards one or other of the four approaches.

“Generation Led was put out there as the way forward, they thought the project was highly likely to succeed, the impression I got, that their minds were made up.” – Deliberative Dialogue participant.”

Some of the concerns raised in the public dialogue were also mentioned in the Civil Society Forum, with a few participants saying they wanted more clarity or a deeper explanation around some of the terms used.

8.2.1. Concerns around engagement activities

Participants generally felt happy taking part in the group discussions. However, some felt uncomfortable participating in the ‘top trumps’ activity. This exercise involved participants using virtual coins to indicate which of the four draft approaches they preferred – both as individuals and as a group and part of the Civil Society Forum and deliberative workshops. Some Civil Society Forum participants in particular did not want to state a specific preference one way or the other.

The main reason given for the objection was that each of the four approaches were either flawed or incomplete. One participant felt “manipulated” while a number of others said they thought a blend of all four



approaches should be pursued. Several people felt the decision to follow a particular approach had already been made and therefore felt the engagement process had been devalued.

"All these approaches suit EirGrid but they don't seem to suit anyone else." Deliberative Dialogue participant.

8.3. Polling

At the end of the Industry and Civil Society Forum sessions, participants were asked to answer a series of poll questions. Deliberative Dialogue participants were invited to take part in a poll after each of the three workshops.

The full data is reported in Appendix C, however highlights are provided below.

8.3.1. Industry Forum

All respondents said that they found the information presented in the forum either 'very useful' or 'quite useful'. They all said the responses given during the Q&A sessions either 'very helpful' or 'quite helpful.' Nearly all said that they felt that their overall understanding of the project had increased.

8.3.2. Civil Society Forum

Most Civil Society Forum participants said that they understood how feedback would be used. They also agreed that EirGrid had a transparent approach to providing information and that they felt comfortable contributing to the discussion. They said the activities helped them understand the four draft approaches and that they had enjoyed taking part.

8.3.3. Deliberative Dialogue

At the end of each session participants were provided with a short poll. The vast majority polled after the first workshop thought the materials were useful; felt comfortable contributing to the discussion; and enjoyed taking part.

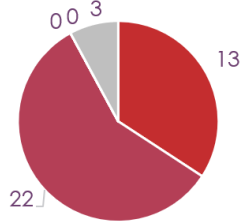
Following the second workshop most respondents said they found the presentations easy to understand and that they now have a greater understanding of EirGrid's work.

After the third workshop, most agreed that the activities helped them to understand the four draft approaches proposed and that they understood how their feedback will be used by EirGrid.

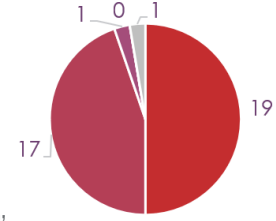


Polling: Workshop 1

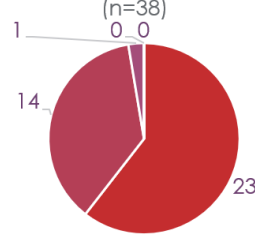
"I found the information and materials provided to be useful." (n=38)



"I felt comfortable contributing to the discussion." (n=38)



"I enjoyed taking part today." (n=38)



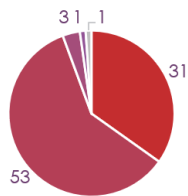
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Source of data: Zoom poll report

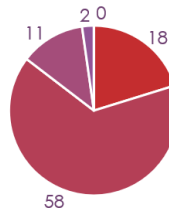
Figure 5: Survey results from poll taken after the first Deliberative Dialogue workshop

Polling: Workshop 2

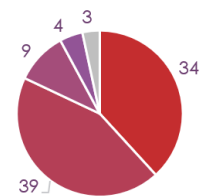
"I found the information and materials provided to be useful." (n=89)



"I found the presentations easy to understand." (n=89)

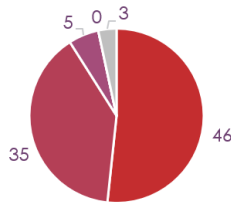


"I felt comfortable contributing to the discussion." (n=89)



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

"I enjoyed taking part today." (n=89)



"I now have a greater understanding of EirGrid's work." (n=89)

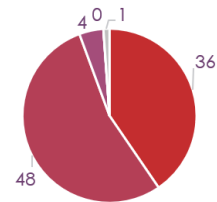


Figure 6: Survey results from poll taken after the second Deliberative Dialogue workshop

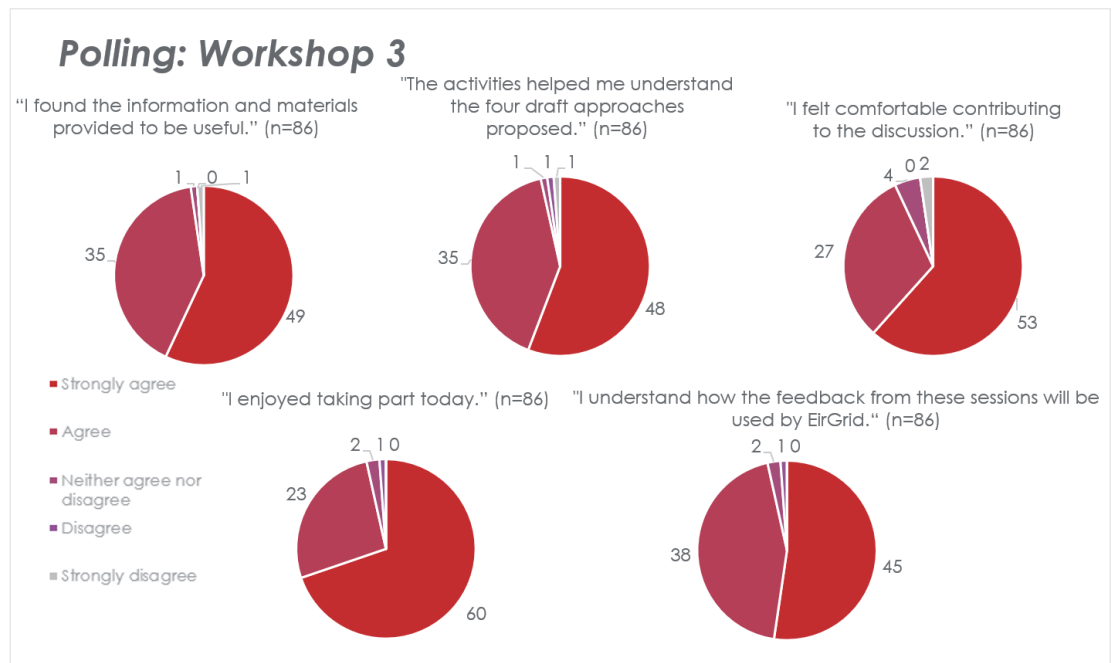


Figure 7: Survey results from poll taken after the final Deliberative Dialogue workshop

8.4. Feedback on the consultation process

While many respondents made comments in support of the consultation in general terms, others were critical of certain elements of the consultation. A few respondents said that the response form was unhelpful or that the questions were leading. A similar number of respondents claimed that the maps or information provided were biased or inaccurate, for example in the assumptions about the cost of the generation-led approach or the potential contribution of solar power to the energy mix, or the representation of power generation in Galway and Mayo. A few respondents argued that the consultation was inadequately publicised.

Regarding terminology used, a few respondents said that the naming of the generation-led and demand-led approaches was ambiguous, while others said that the technology-led approach is unclear, inasmuch as the proposed technology should be used regardless of what approach is chosen.

A few respondents queried whether the use of four separate options was appropriate in helping participants to understand the wider context of energy generation and usage, as well as the legal and policy context.

Some respondents said that information was lacking on a range of specific points. In relation to wind generation, for example, respondents asked for details about the regulation and construction of onshore generation, and queried whether EirGrid had presented a full picture of offshore generation off the west coast, including floating offshore generation. In relation to the assessment criteria, respondents asked how the environmental and social impact criteria were developed and applied. Respondents raised other topics where they said that information was lacking including: network optimisation in the developer-led approach; the details of the assumed



energy demand in 2050; the role of microgeneration in reaching the renewables target, and the role of energy storage; and security of supply without connections to new synchronous generation sources.

A small number of business representative organisations said that the information provided did not give detail on how generators in the North-West would connect to the proposed HVDC link from Donegal to Dublin.

Some respondents, including stakeholder organisations, emphasised the need for more engagement and consultation as part of the decision-making process for Shaping Our Electricity Future. A few respondents said that EirGrid should be transparent about how consultation responses will be considered in the decision-making process.



9. Summary of Partner Engagement

Throughout the Shaping Our Electricity Future Consultation, partner engagements with the National Youth Council of Ireland, Chambers Ireland and Irish Rural Link ensured a broad cross-section of society was reached and engaged with. These three pillars facilitated a deep-dive into each of their associated demographics. This section synthesises the feedback received from each partner in more detail.

9.1. National Youth Council of Ireland

As part of their engagement for this project, EirGrid collaborated with the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI). NYCI created a website and promotional campaign, produced a video and held local workshops. The local workshops were held with Cork YMCA, Eco Unesco, Foróige Donegal, Macra na Feirme, NYCI Global Youth Work 'youth cttee' and Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg. This culminated in an online Youth Assembly.

The website and video were designed specifically for young people, and both the workshops and assembly were utilised to gather young people's perspectives on the proposals.

Participants at the workshops acknowledged that they had little or no knowledge about EirGrid, how the company worked or the role it plays in the overall energy picture in Ireland.

The attendees were given the opportunity to discuss the innovations that would be commonplace by 2030, with various relevant technologies mentioned such as hydrogen, solar panels, wind turbines and geothermal energy.

Participants highlighted sustainability as the main thing that comes to mind when thinking about renewable energy. Within the session, there were questions about whether the proposals were realistic, whether certain information was being omitted and who would benefit.

Some in the assembly suggested that there were no disadvantages to the generation-led approach, while others believed that stakeholders should have a larger involvement. However, a high percentage of attendees suggested a mix between two or more of the four options. In smaller group discussions, participants queried the feasibility of a mix of options and how costly the proposals could end up being. After the breakout groups, attendees selected their preferred proposal, again with generation-led being the most popular and developer-led the least.

Participants in the workshops highlighted generation-led as the most attractive approach, with technology-led closely following as the second most preferred option.

Many participants said they were grateful to have been involved in the process, in particular because they will be affected by the decision that is



made. They found the session to be educational and said their knowledge of how the grid in Ireland works has increased.

9.2. Chambers Ireland

EirGrid took part in eight workshops with Chambers Ireland to understand the views of their members on Shaping Our Electricity Future. Although participants were almost unanimously concerned about climate change and were focussed on decarbonisation, many were unclear about the exact role that EirGrid plays.

Participants overwhelmingly felt that EirGrid should be prioritising adding renewable supplies to the transmission network, as they believe that existing issues around lack of capacity within the network are leading to a waste of renewable energy. Throughout the discussions, participants highlighted six main themes:

- Regional opportunities;
- Technological concerns;
- Social acceptance;
- Institutional capacity;
- Customer price; and
- Financing projects.

Attendees of the Chambers Ireland workshops were attracted to the principle of developing the grid, as it was seen as an opportunity for economic growth and regional development – particularly on the west coast. Participants also discussed the prospect of utilising the vast renewable energy resources throughout Ireland in the road to decarbonisation. Some expressed concerns that the majority of domestic energy demand originates in the Greater Dublin area where it is more difficult to supply renewable energy.

Some participants thought the proposed approaches lacked ambition and others focused on alternative energy supplies. Workshop attendees stressed that none of the four options were sufficient in facilitating the amount of generative capacity that the government is aiming to see developed in the next decade. Participants were enthusiastic about the range of alternative renewable energy supplies such as hydrogen and floating offshore wind among others, including the use of microgeneration. However, participants also discussed anxieties around such new technologies and felt it may be useful for EirGrid to develop contingencies should there be setbacks in technological advances.

A few workshop participants discussed the need for strong community links for each proposed strategy to avoid the stalling of projects as a result of planning objections. Such community links were discussed with regard to EirGrid partnering other agencies on future technologies, allowing the



partner agencies to potentially become local advocates for the decarbonisation process. Many participants also stressed that grid developments may affect the tourism industry of more rural areas known for the beauty of the landscape.

Participants regularly said that they were concerned about the resilience of the planning system. Some thought the system would not be able to cope with the high volume of projects that would require approval if the 2030 targets were to be met. Only a minority however classed this as their “highest concern” when they were asked during the workshops. Many participants were unsure whether the change in generation and transmission systems would have any effect on the price that they would pay as a consumer.

Chambers Ireland also carried out a survey of those who attended the workshops. As part of the survey, participants ranked the final cost for customers below all other concerns. Attendees also said the lack of capacity on the grid was an issue in terms of financing the projects.

Of the four proposed strategies, attendees at the Chambers Ireland workshops favoured the demand-led approach. However, some felt that this approach would have to be tightly coupled with other investments to support the needs of businesses to relocate. Some in the north-west felt that a combination of the technology-led and demand-led could achieve the bare minimum needed to restore competitiveness for the region, while the developer-led was the least favoured by participants.

9.3. Irish Rural Link

Irish Rural Link (IRL) conducted virtual workshops with rural communities in six different regions. There was a short presentation at each workshop, giving an overview of the approaches, followed by breakout sessions to ensure that all 300 participants could give their views. The majority of participants agreed that Ireland should be doing everything possible to ensure 70% of its electricity comes from renewable sources by 2030. However, attendees also expressed scepticism about the impact that a small nation like Ireland could have on climate change compared to larger nations, although there was also an acceptance that all nations have a role to play. Ultimately, participants from the IRL workshops highlighted five main themes:

- Community energy;
- Community engagement;
- Site location;
- Preference for underground cables;



- Microgeneration.

Attendees felt that in addition to the four options proposed by EirGrid, there should also be a community-led approach. A common theme across all six workshops was that the role of communities is undervalued and under-utilised in terms of both producing energy and in engaging with project developers. Participants acknowledged that community energy projects would not allow Ireland to reach the 2030 target alone, however there was a consensus that they could make a meaningful contribution.

Attendees also discussed partnering local authorities and community projects, and raised objections to windfarms in specific areas such as mountains and uplands due to the damage that they could cause to the biodiversity and wildlife population.

Participants in the workshops highlighted the need for earlier and continuous engagement with communities. Some regional groups referred to distrust towards the government or developers on the part of local communities, based on past initiatives. Some rural workers felt that they should be much more involved in decision-making around the location of specific infrastructure projects, given that it such project could directly impacted upon them and their land.

Participants in some groups felt that their local area had a significant number of windfarms but acknowledged that farms on the east coast could be a viable option due to the large population density of the Greater Dublin area.

Finally, there were also discussions surrounding the preference for underground cables and microgeneration within the six workshops. There was an understanding across the groups that it would be less straightforward to install underground cables, however this did not deter attendees from highlighting their preference for this approach. Participants discussed the role that microgeneration and the use of farm buildings could have in the contribution to energy generation. Participants believed that farms should also be able to sell excess energy to the grid or trade it with other farmers.

Participants at the six IRL workshops concluded that, in order for Ireland to meet its renewables target, there would need to be a mix of the four potential options suggested by EirGrid, as well as the addition of a community-led approach.

These workshops were supported by Community Power and MaREI.



10. Summary of Feedback

In general, participants across all three streams of engagement were positive about Ireland's electricity future and felt that although the journey to net zero was a difficult one, the country's ambitions to move to cleaner energy were achievable. Most were excited to be part of the discussion and to help determine the next steps.

In terms of EirGrid's four approaches, participants had differing opinions on which should be adopted. Most Deliberative Dialogue participants favoured the generation-led approach, followed by demand-led. Participants were less favourable to the technology-led approach while the developer-led approach was the least popular of the four. Attendees of the Civil Society Forum had similar preferences although some participants were reluctant to commit to any of the four approaches.

Deliberative Dialogue participants were asked to work together in small groups to come up with statements, setting out what they expected EirGrid to prioritise. These are reported in full in Appendix D. However, the following themes are covered:

- Community involvement/community benefit
- Cost effectiveness
- Fairness
- Environmental protection
- Sustainability beyond 2030

"We want EirGrid to prioritise cost-effective sustainable energy, equal distribution and community benefit to the whole of Ireland."

– Deliberative Dialogue participant

"We want EirGrid to prioritise the delivery of clean energy generation with clear communications and transparency in every aspect of the process. Ongoing accountability and future-proofing is critical so that we have an equitable, sustainable first-class system nationwide that doesn't adversely impact on community and environment, and provides value for money."

Deliberative Dialogue participant



10.1. The role of the community

One consistent discussion point, especially in the Civil Society Forum, was the need to involve local communities. This was considered important both in ensuring communities have a proper say in what infrastructure is to be built in their locality but also playing a role in terms of microgeneration.

A number of participants felt EirGrid needed to consider how groups could be connected to the grid at a community level. One participant felt consideration should be given to community ownership of wind farms.

A wider point was consistently made about the requirement for more community engagement both around Shaping Our Electricity Future and in more general terms around EirGrid's programme of infrastructure development. This included engagement around potential benefits at community level, in particular job creation.

“There are good points to each approach, but they are too far removed from communities. People want to know how it will affect them. Everyone wants clean energy. Everyone wants to do the right thing around climate action.” – Civil Society Forum participant

10.2. The need for more information

Participants in all of the engagement streams made the point about the need to keep providing information to stakeholders and members of the public. A number said they wanted to see systemic change so they could be much more involved in the future.

“For communities to get involved is a long, drawn out process. The ability for the system to engage is flawed. We need a strategy. Communities cannot make the grid. EirGrid are a crucial part of it – this needs further discussion.” – Civil Society Forum participant

10.3. Beyond the 2030 targets

Most participants felt that the target of reaching 70% renewable energy by 2030 was an important step. However, many thought that long-term sustainability should be the ultimate ambition. There was a willingness among several to make significant lifestyle changes, but concern that this would disproportionately affect those on the lowest incomes. The general sentiment was that the level of sacrifice required should result in benefits that stretched well beyond 2030.

Civil Society Forum participants were mainly of the view that a blend of the four approaches would be the optimum solution. However, they were eager to see exploration of other areas. Some suggested existing infrastructure such as power stations could be reused, and that certain technologies, including solar panels, hydropower, carbon capture and storage, and small nuclear plants, might also have a key role in reaching the renewables target.



Many also wanted the wider implications of these approaches to be considered, including the long-term impact of large-scale electricity users relocating to areas outside Dublin.

Given the need for sustainable and joined-up solutions, some of the Civil Society Forum participants asked whether EirGrid can play a role in supporting the heat and transport sectors to reduce their demand.

Overall, the consensus was that significant investment should result in infrastructure and an electricity grid that stands the test of time.

Many regional stakeholders felt that EirGrid needed to consider a number of alternative and additional solutions, including:

- Microgeneration at the community level;
- The use of anaerobic digesters;
- Wave/tidal/hydro power;
- Geothermal Power;
- District heating;
- Storage or repurposing of excess power; and
- Combined heat and power plants.

10.4. Consultation summary

There was a high level of support for reaching the renewables target amongst consultation respondents. In responding to the closed questions, respondents also expressed support approximately equally for the generation-led, technology-led and demand-led approaches. The developer-led approach received less support.

In responses to the open questions, the generation-led option received the highest level of support, followed by the demand-led option. The developer-led option received the least support. Respondents expressed concerns about each option, although many more respondents expressed concern about the developer-led approach than the other three approaches.

The common strands that respondents raised in responding to each question are summarised in the sections below, while specific comments received in relation to each option include:

- **Generation-led:** Respondents felt that this represented an efficient approach, in terms of reducing the amount of infrastructure required. There was particular support for use of offshore wind energy, which was perceived as having less potential impact on communities and the environment. Respondents sometimes said that this approach represented further development in the region of the country that is already most developed.



- **Developer-led:** While respondents sometimes expressed support for this approach on the basis of the expertise of renewables developers, citing the 40% renewables figure in the present energy mix, there were concerns that developers would be motivated by profit, with perceptions that communities and the environment would be impacted by developers' decisions as to where to site renewables generation.
- **Technology-led:** Respondents expressed support for the use of technology in the transmission system, and for the proposal to place cables underground. However, the cost and feasibility of this approach, including its potential ineffectiveness in reaching the renewables target, were described as concerns.
- **Demand-led:** this approach was perceived as providing opportunities for regional development, as well as being efficient in terms of the amount of infrastructure required. There were some concerns that the approach could lead to the industrialisation of rural areas, as well as concerns that the approach might not be viable, as businesses have a range of reasons, aside from energy provision, for deciding where to locate. Some respondents said that large energy users could generate energy on-site, while others worried about the energy usage of data centres, saying that they would use a high proportion of Ireland's total energy use.

Potential local impacts

Respondents highlighted the potential impact of renewables infrastructure, including associated grid developments, on the local environment, saying that ecosystems, biodiversity and the landscape would be negatively affected by such infrastructure. Respondents also often raised the perceived impacts on residents of the local area, claiming that the quality of life of local people would be affected.

Respondents sometimes worried that there would be an uneven spread of the potential impacts and benefits of reaching the renewables target. These respondents claimed that some citizens, such as those in rural areas, would host infrastructure without receiving any benefits from doing so.

Broader social considerations

Respondents raised other social considerations in reflecting on the approaches for meeting the renewables target. One example of this is the possibility that the decarbonisation of Ireland's energy could lead to economic benefits for the country in general, or for particular areas of the country, including more rural or undeveloped areas.

Respondents sometimes worried that the move towards increased clean energy usage could mean that household energy supply would be less secure, or that bills could increase. Others suggested that reaching the renewables target could form part of a just transition to a decarbonised economy, with sustainable innovation and employment delivered in partnership with communities.



Another topic raised by respondents was the role of microgeneration in reaching the renewables target. Respondents said that households, farms, businesses, and communities should benefit from generating energy. These respondents argued that this would help Ireland to reach the 2030 target, as well as fostering a sense of broader public involvement in decarbonisation.

Strategic approach

Respondents, particularly stakeholder organisations, said that appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks should be put in place to support the chosen approach to reaching the renewables target. These respondents argued that a strategic approach to the decarbonisation of energy is required. They claimed that there should be appropriate policies in place to ensure that renewable generation is sited so as to make best use of the resources available, while also considering any environmental and social impacts.

Respondents offered views on a range of strategic considerations, including the need to promote energy efficiency and reduction, and to implement energy storage, often referring to the wider context of the electrification of heat and transport. There were suggestions as to the range of renewable technologies that could be used to reach the energy target, with particular support for offshore wind.

Respondents said that they wanted a consistent or “whole government” approach to be put in place to manage the long-term energy transition. They believed that this would enable decision-making about how best to mitigate any impacts from renewables infrastructure on local communities and the wider public, as well as how to realise the possible benefits of renewables most fairly.



11. Next Steps

The fourteen week Shaping Our Electricity Future Public Consultation has resulted in a solid bedrock of information upon which EirGrid's next steps can be developed, in order to achieve the national goal of having at least 70% electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and net zero by 2050.

The public consultation feedback received here will form part of the inputs to scenario-based modelling and cost-benefit analysis of network, electricity markets and power system operations initiatives, to determine the safest and most efficient ways to meet power system requirements.

The complete Shaping Our Electricity Future consultation processes, through collaboration with Government, Regulatory Authorities, industry stakeholders and consumers, will assist in delivering the key objectives:

1. Providing clarity and agreement on a way forward that will ultimately deliver on our renewable obligations.
2. Identify clear milestones and timelines that consider power system operations and market dependencies.
3. Provide input to a coordinated plan to inform the development of electricity infrastructure, and enhancement of system operations and electricity markets.

The next step will involve the publication of the inaugural Shaping Our Electricity Future Roadmap in October '21. The Roadmap outlines a profound transition to a power system of renewable resources, such as offshore wind generation, onshore wind generation and solar PV, supported by energy storage and network reinforcements.

The guiding principle of the Roadmap will be to meet the Renewable Ambition of being net zero carbon by 2050, while maintaining a safe, affordable, and reliable supply of electricity for all consumers.

To ensure accuracy and relevancy, the Roadmap will be an evolving document, with future iterations encompassing any governmental updates that may occur between now and 2030.

Appendix A: Recruitment and attendance

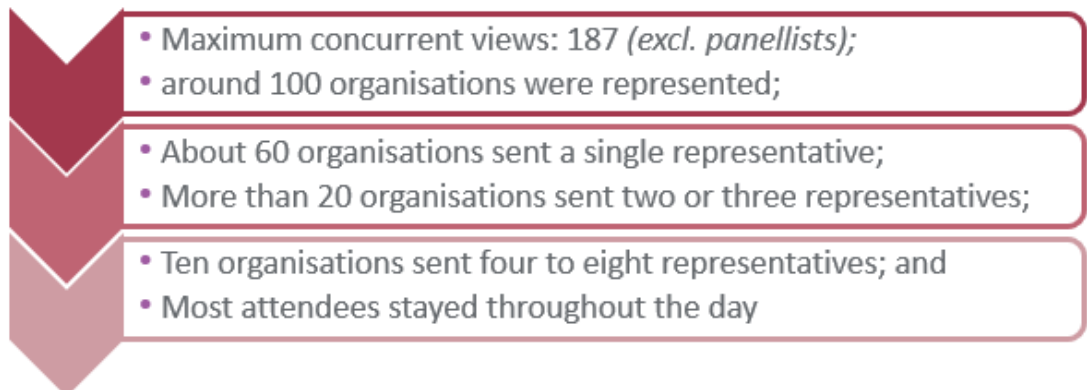
Industry Forum

EirGrid invited stakeholders to register for the event on the OpenConsult platform. In addition to their name and contact details, participants were asked the following:

- Organisation name, and role within it
- What is your existing relationship to EirGrid?
- What is your primary interest in Shaping Our Electricity Future?
- What are your expectations of this industry forum?
- Have you any questions for EirGrid that you would like addressed at this industry forum?

In total 260 participants registered on OpenConsult, representing 130 different organisations. Of those, 39 participants submitted questions when they registered. Questions were answered by EirGrid representatives throughout the webinar, which took place from 9am until 1pm.

In total, 199 stakeholders attended the event on Zoom (excluding representatives from EirGrid, SONI and Traverse).



Civil Society Forum

EirGrid invited Civil Society representatives to a two-hour workshop. Stakeholders registered for the forum via Zoom. In addition to their name and contact details, participants were asked to include the name of the organisation they represent and their role within it.

A total **92** stakeholders attended the event. They represented **84** different organisations.

Deliberative Dialogues

99 participants were recruited for the Deliberative Dialogue (50 women, 49 men). Recruitment was carried out by a specialist recruiter engaged by EirGrid, using a similar methodology to that used for recruitment for the Citizens' Assembly. Participants were representative of national



demographics in terms of region (Dublin, Rest of Leinster, Munster, Connacht/Ulster), socio-economic group and age group.

Participants were drawn from a wide range of occupations including sales, accounting and insurance; youth work, teaching and lecturing; delivery and taxi driving; building and painting; nursing and massage; farming, garda and music. There were also home workers, students and retirees.

Attendees ranged in age from 21 to 75 years old. A total of 98 participants attended the first two workshops while all 99 took part in the third and final session.



Appendix B: Engagement process and activities

Industry Forum

Jon O'Sullivan (Head of Future Markets, EirGrid) delivered a presentation on Electricity Markets, which was followed by a Q&A session chaired by Liam Ryan (Chief Innovation and Planning Officer).

This presentation covered how electricity markets are currently run, demands that will be placed on them in the future, aims and principles that underpin EirGrid's approach to them, and EirGrid's recommendations and considerations for the future.

15 questions were submitted by participants during or relating to the Electricity Markets session. Of these questions, 9 were answered live, with the remaining questions answered after the event.

- Questions covered topics including:
- a perceived need to reduce minimum generation,
- cost implications,
- pricing models and logistics,
- the role of renewables in the balancing market, and
- the plan after 2030.

Eoin Kennedy (Head of Future Operations, EirGrid) delivered a presentation on System Operations, which was followed by Q&A session chaired by Liam Ryan.

The presentation covered the challenges of decarbonization, the risks to the system in future years, the need for forecasting, Transmission System Operators-Distribution System Operators partnership, and planned programmes of work.

16 questions were submitted by participants during or relating to the System Operations session. Of these questions, 12 were answered live, with the remaining questions answered after the event.

Questions covered topics including:

- network reinforcement and development,
- supply and need estimates,
- the Flextech project,
- flexible technology and systems, and
- consultation processes.

Robbie Aherne, Head of Future Networks (EirGrid) delivered a presentation on Transmission Networks, which was followed by a Q&A session chaired by Liam Ryan.



This presentation covered changing generation and demand portfolios over the next decade, challenges of renewable generation, four draft approaches to meet targets, and the factors behind finding the right approach.

25 questions were submitted by participants during or relating to the Transmission Networks session. Of these questions, 11 were answered live, with the remaining questions to be answered after the event. Questions covered topics including:

- project selection,
- consultation processes,
- demand specifics,
- industry involvement and support,
- the role of solar power, and
- modelling processes.

Civil Society Forum

Marie Donnelly, Chair of the Climate Change Advisory Council, opened the forum and introduced EirGrid Chief Executive Mark Foley.

Liam Ryan, Chief Innovation and Planning Officer, covered the role of EirGrid and outlined why it is necessary to prepare the grid so that at least 70% of Ireland's electricity can come from renewable sources by 2030.

Robbie Aherne, Head of Future Networks, provided a detailed explanation of the four different approaches that EirGrid are proposing in order to reach at least 70% renewable energy by 2030. This presentation included comparisons between the four draft approaches in relation to a number of different criteria:

- the likelihood of meeting the renewable target;
- security of supply;
- need for new infrastructure;
- impact on developers;
- impact on high-demand users; and
- technical difficulty.

Participants then formed smaller discussion groups to consider the four different approaches. Facilitators used 'Top Trump' cards to give participants a better understanding of how the approaches compared against several different criteria. Each individual within the group was asked to allocate tokens to their preferred approach. Facilitators then asked the group to make a collective decision where to allocate tokens.



Figure 7: Top Trumps cards used by facilitators to help participants compare approaches.

Deliberative Dialogue

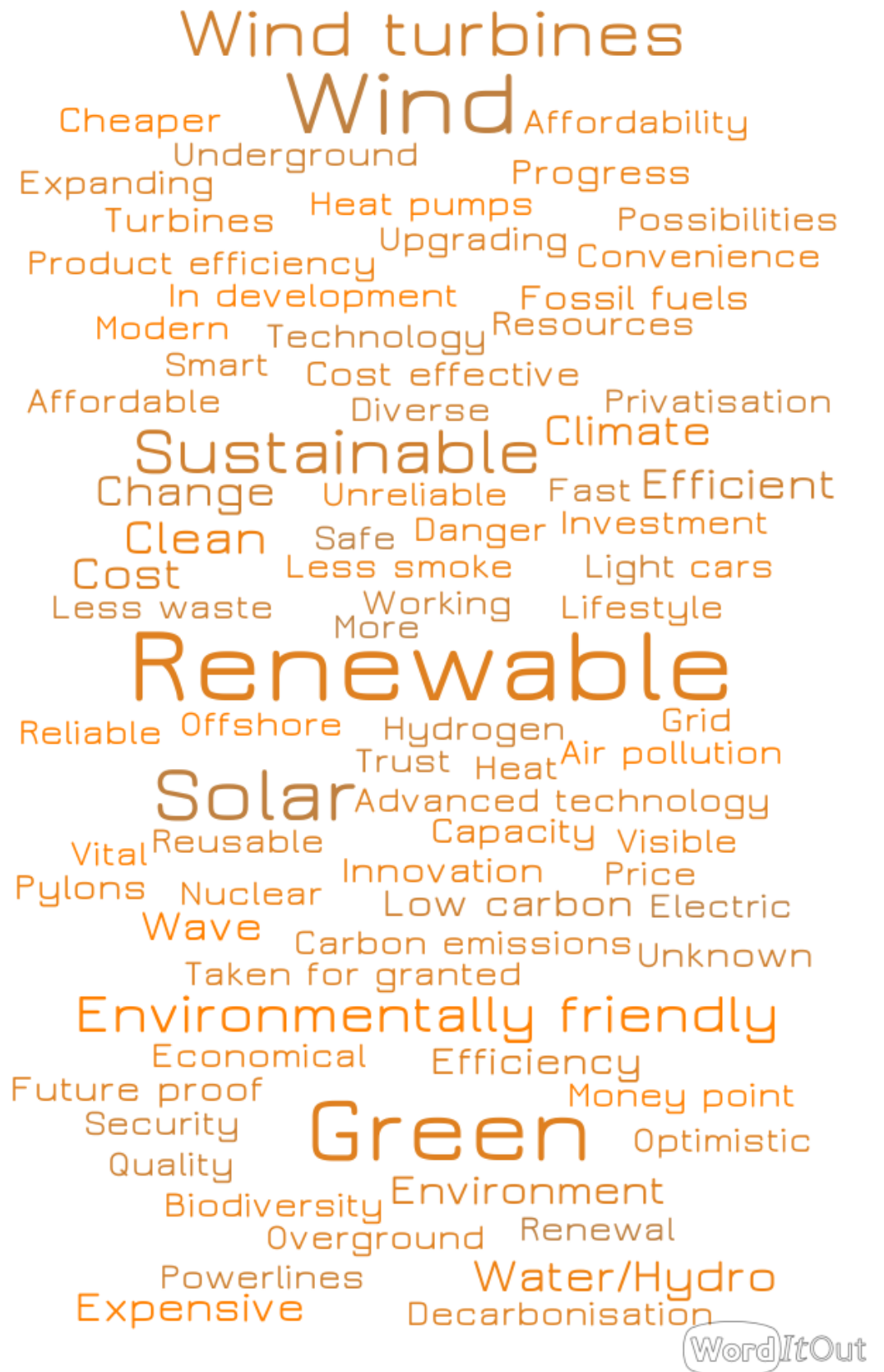
The dialogue comprised three workshops across five days: Tuesday 18 May (18:00 – 20:00), Thursday 20 May (18:00 – 20:00) and Saturday 22 May (10:00 – 13:00).

The events were delivered via Zoom with breakout rooms used for smaller group discussions.

After each workshop, participants were asked to carry out some reflective activities using Padlet, an online platform for collaboration. They also completed a baseline and an endline survey.

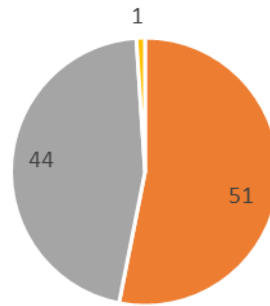
Baseline survey

Participants were asked to write three words that come to mind when you hear the expression “the future of electricity in Ireland”? A word-cloud of their responses is included on the following page.



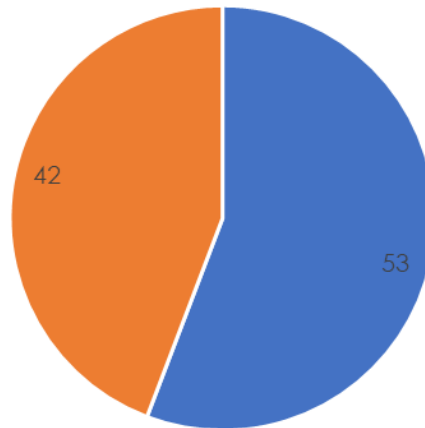
Participants were also asked three closed questions about the extent of their knowledge about climate change, the renewables target and EirGrid. A breakdown of their responses is presented in the charts below.

How much do you feel you know about climate change? (n=96)

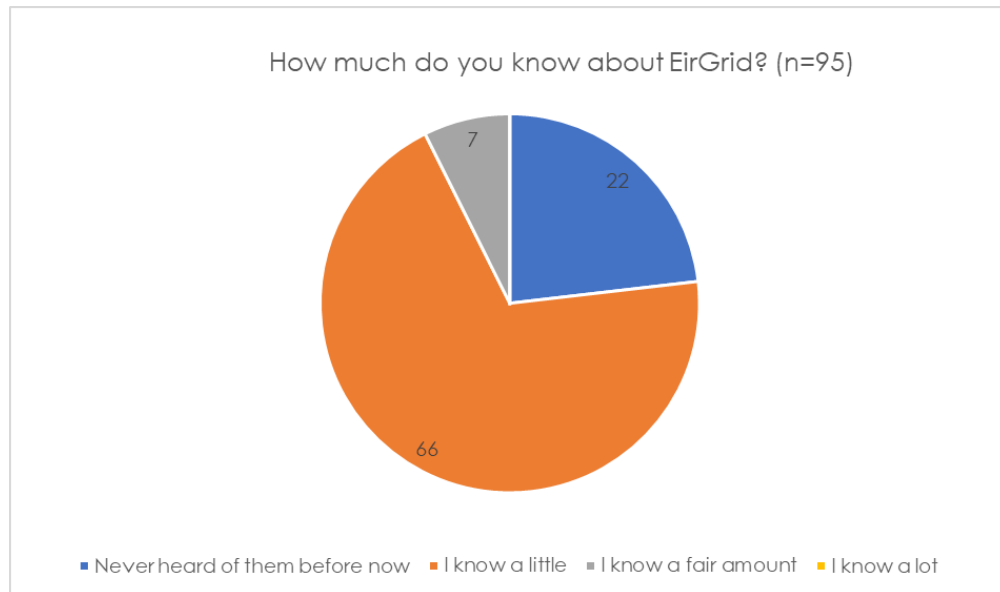


- Never heard of it before now
- I know a little
- I know a fair amount
- I know a lot

Were you aware that the Irish government has committed to a target of 70% of Ireland's electricity coming from renewable sources by 2030? (n=95)



- Yes
- No



Workshop 1: Climate change and the energy landscape

Tom Arnold, the former Chair of the Constitutional Convention, opened the workshop as Chair, and introduced EirGrid Chief Executive Mark Foley, who welcomed participants.

This was followed by a presentation by Professor Brian Ó Gallachóir of MaREI (University College Cork) on Electricity and Climate Change.

A second presentation was given by Professor John Curtis of the ESRI, on Energy Infrastructure and Public Acceptance.

Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions of the experts after each presentation, and joined the facilitated break-out groups for introductions and initial reflections on what they had heard.

Workshop 2: Introducing the project and the four approaches

In the second workshop, Tom Arnold introduced Liam Ryan, Chief Innovation and Planning Officer, who explained EirGrid's role in electricity transmission and outlined why it is necessary to prepare the grid so that at least 70% of Ireland's electricity can come from renewable sources by 2030.

Robbie Aherne, Head of Future Networks, provided a detailed explanation of the four different approaches EirGrid are proposing in order to reach this target. His presentation included comparisons between the four draft approaches in relation to a number of different criteria.

Once again, participants were given an opportunity to ask questions after each presentation. Participants subsequently joined their break-out groups for a facilitated discussion of their initial responses to the SOEF project.

Workshop 3: Deliberating on the draft approaches

After Tom Arnold's welcome, participants joined their groups to prepare questions for the guest experts. Each group had an expert from EirGrid and at least one expert from another organisation, with twenty minutes provided



for a Q&A session.

External experts came from: the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communication, Chambers Ireland, MaREI, Irish Rural Link, Friends of the Earth and the National Youth Council of Ireland.

Using the same 'top trumps' game methodology as in the Civil Society Forum, facilitators guided participants in allocating tokens to their preferred approach, individually and as a group, encouraging group deliberation on the perceived benefits and drawbacks of each approach.

Participants in the deliberative dialogue allocated the tokens as per the table below (n=174):

Generation-led	Developer-led	Technology-led	Demand-led
79.75	4.75	25.25	64.25

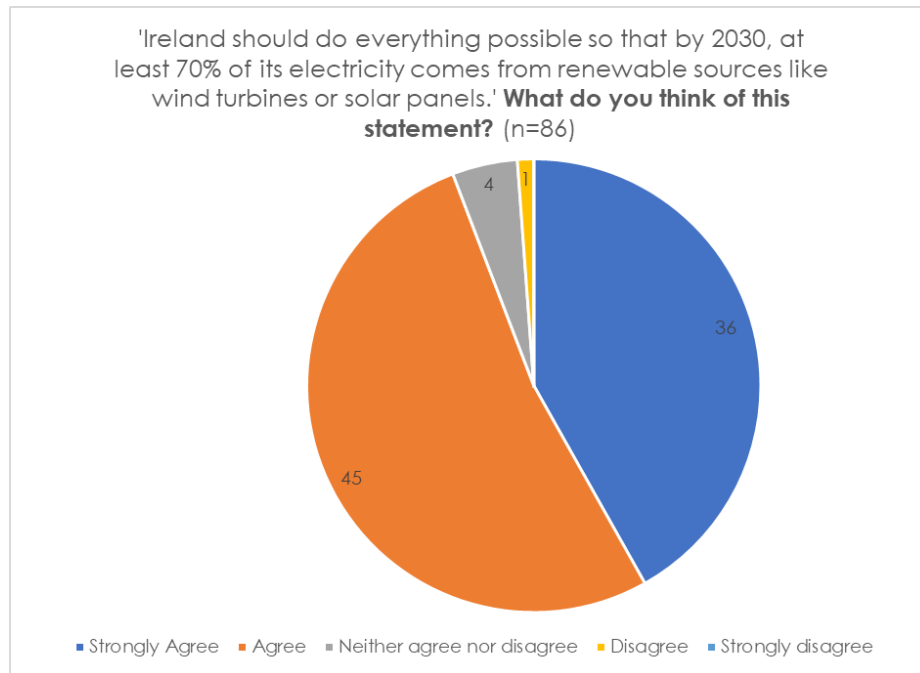
Facilitators then guided participants in completing an opportunity statement for EirGrid in the following format: "We want EirGrid to prioritise_____ so that _____."

Opportunity statements were copied onto a Mural board and presented by each facilitator in plenary. Finally, the Chair invited Sinead Dooley, Head of Public Engagement, to thank participants and close the event.

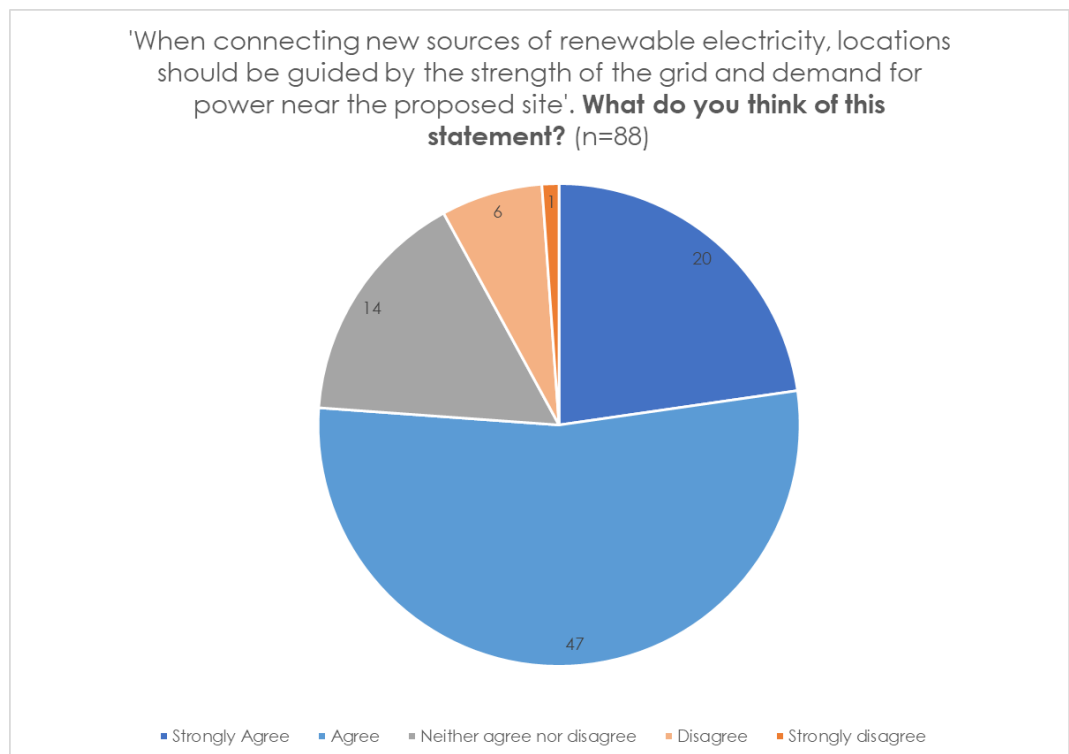
External experts came from: the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communication, Chambers Ireland, MaREI, Irish Rural Link, Friends of the Earth and the National Youth Council of Ireland.

Endline survey

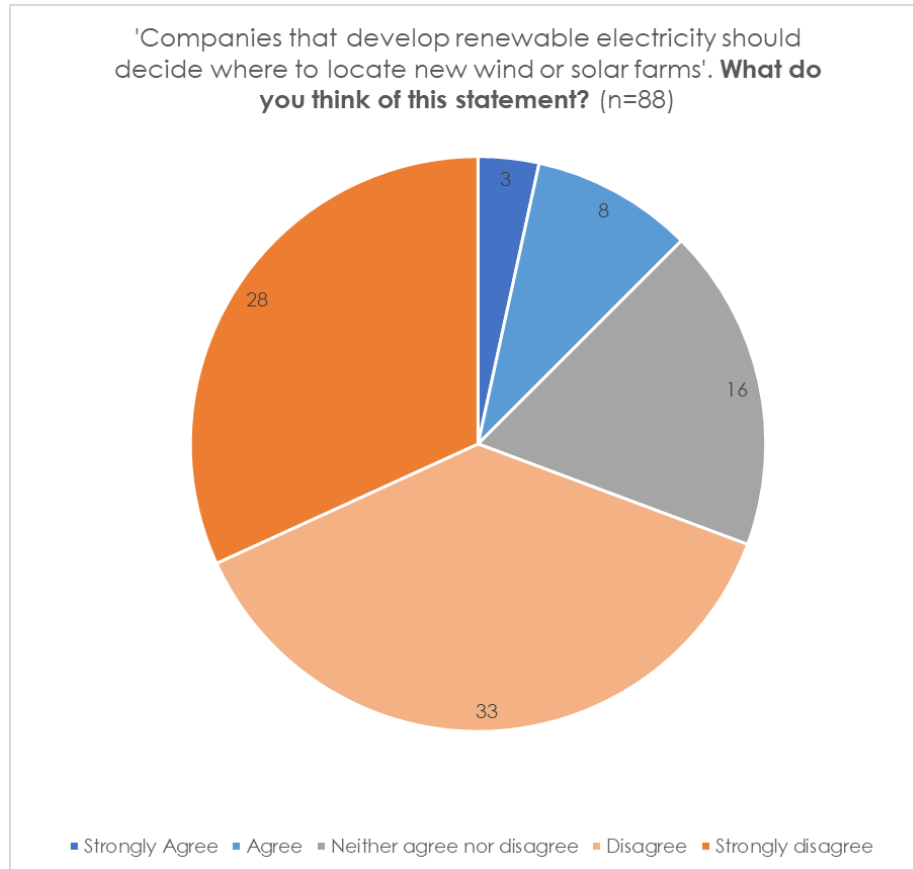
Participants were asked to complete an endline survey following the final workshop. The responses are summarised below.



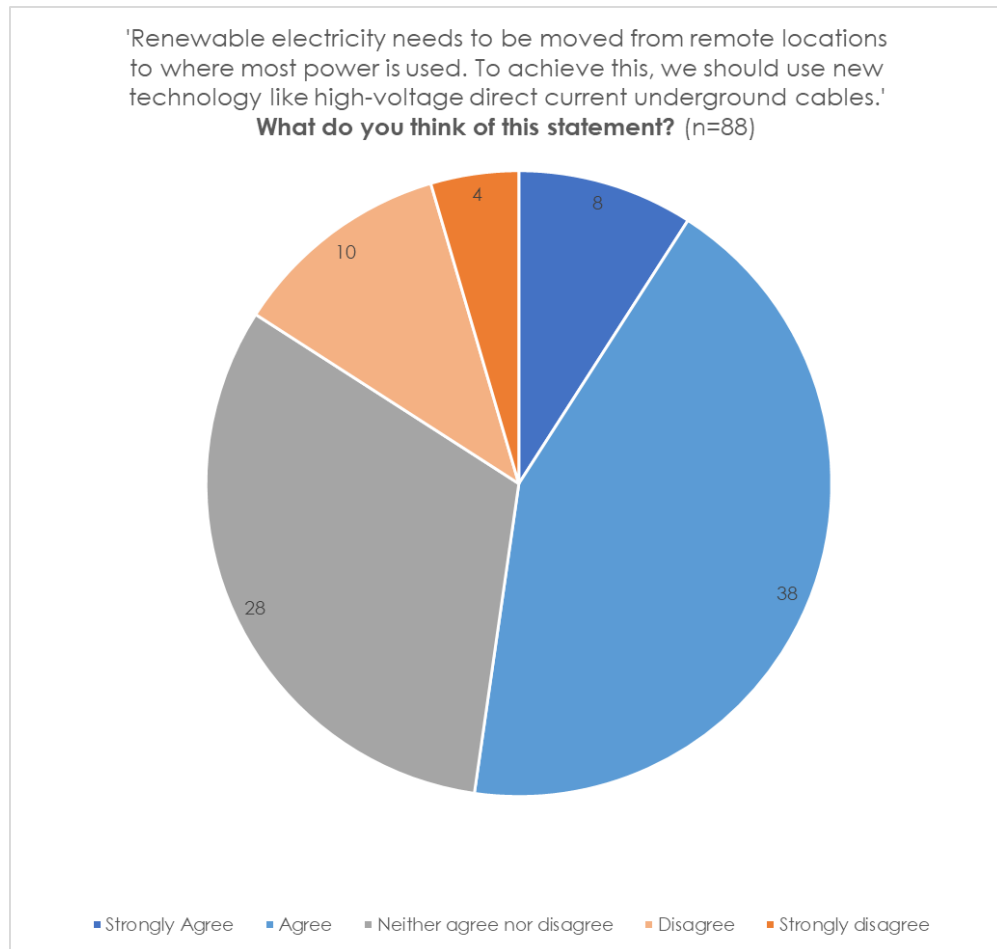
Participants supported the renewables target, saying that it is appropriate for Ireland to do its part to respond to climate change; they said that it makes sense to use the resources available in the country, not only wind and solar, but also hydro, wave, tidal and biomass. A few participants said that reaching the target would mean that Ireland would not have to pay a penalty for missing the target, while a few emphasised the importance of a strategic approach to decarbonisation, saying that the target should be reached in the right way, and that a delay would be acceptable if it meant that the right means of reaching the target were adopted. A few participants said that the costs of reaching the target should be minimised, as well as any impacts on local communities.



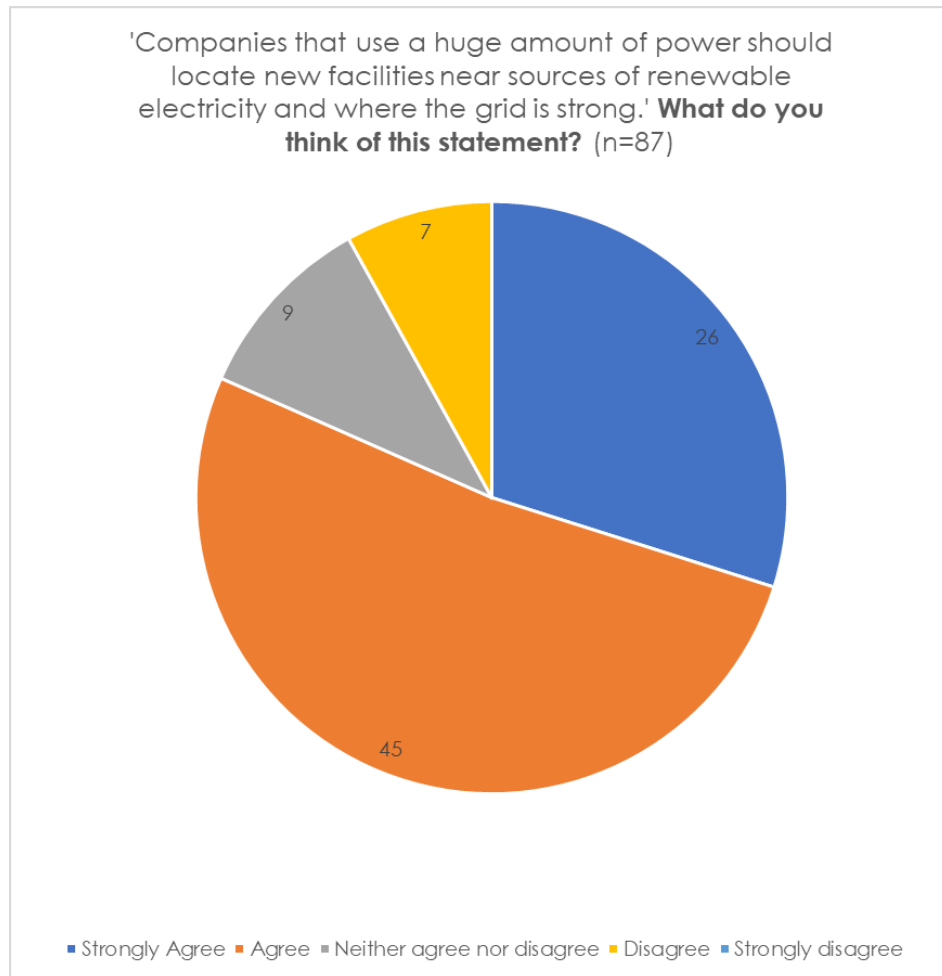
Participants said that this approach makes sense, that it would be cheaper and more efficient than other approaches, and would mean that there would be less of a visual impact from the energy infrastructure. A few respondents worried however that this approach would lead to a concentration of infrastructure on the east coast, which they said is already overcrowded, while other areas need further investment.



Participants were worried about developers' perceived motivation to make a profit, preferring that local communities or public bodies should have a say in the location of infrastructure. A few participants said that this approach would not be likely to reach the 2030 target. Some respondents said that developers' experience should however be drawn upon in delivering the chosen approach.



Although some participants liked the idea of using innovative technology, others thought that it would be expensive, might not allow Ireland to reach the renewables target, and would require a lot of new infrastructure. Some participants supported undergrounding, while others said that this could have a negative impact on the environment. Participants sometimes said that elements of this approach could be used in combination with other approaches.



Participants supported this approach for potentially allowing a greater redistribution of companies around the country, with the potential for more jobs in rural areas. Some participants worried that companies would oppose the implementation of this approach, pointing out that companies consider various requirements in deciding where to locate, not just energy. Other participants said that communities near proposed developments, might oppose this approach.

Participants were asked to provide any final feedback on the project. They raised a range of issues, supporting the use of various types of renewables or nuclear, or opposing nuclear; advocating use of microgeneration; encouraging a long-term approach to be taken, regardless of government. Some participants called for further engagement, while others said that they would like to see a cost-effective approach. Participants sometimes said that a combination of approaches would be preferable.

Regarding the opportunity statements, participants commented on the commonality of the statements across each group, such as the importance of a sustainable strategic approach to reaching the targets, with appropriate community input, and consideration of the impact on bill-payers.

Asked what went well with the engagement, participants said that the events were informative, open and well-organised, that the facilitation



allowed all participants to have a say and that the Chair managed the plenaries well. They added that the aims were clear, that the pacing was appropriate, and that the sessions were enjoyable. Some participants said that they appreciated the information pack that they had been sent in advance.

Asked what could be done differently in future engagement, some participants said that they missed having the opportunity for face to face engagement. Other comments included: that some of the material was quite technical; that discussion should be managed to ensure wide participants and prevent wider discussion of energy usage or technical details; that more polling could be used; that EirGrid could be introduced on the first day.

A few participants emphasised the need for particular voices to be heard in engagement, including those who struggle to pay bills and young people, or said that there should be more engagement carried out by EirGrid in general. Others said that packs could have been posted earlier, or that a printed pack was not necessary; some said that more Q&A time would have been helpful. Comments on timing included: to start slightly later on weekdays, to add another session, to reduce or add more time to each session, to give slightly longer breaks, and to avoid Saturdays.



Appendix C: Zoom survey data

Industry forum

After the Industry Forum webinar closed, participants were presented with a survey that asked the following questions:

- Did you find the information presented today useful?
- How helpful were the responses given during the Q&A sessions?
- Do you feel that the Industry Forum increased your overall understanding of the Shaping Our Electricity Future project?

57 participants completed the survey.

- All **57** respondents said that they found the information presented in the forum either 'very useful' or 'quite useful'.
- All **57** respondents said that they found the responses given during the Q&A sessions either 'very helpful' or 'quite helpful'.
- **56 of the 57** respondents said that they felt that their overall understanding of the project had increased.

Civil Society Forum

In the Civil Society Forum, participants had an opportunity to post questions and comments in the chat.

At the end of the session participants were presented with a survey that asked to what extent they agreed with each of the following statements:

- "I understand how the feedback from this session will be used by EirGrid."
- "I found the information and materials provided to be useful."
- "I felt that EirGrid had a transparent approach to providing information."
- "I felt comfortable contributing to the discussion."
- "The activities helped me to understand the four draft approaches proposed."
- "I enjoyed taking part today."

46 participants completed the survey. Of those:

- **29 agreed or strongly agreed** that they understood how feedback would be used.
- **42 agreed or strongly agreed** that the information and materials provided were useful.
- **32 agreed or strongly agreed** that EirGrid had a transparent approach to providing information.
- **43 agreed or strongly agreed** that they felt comfortable contributing to the discussion.
- **37 agreed or strongly agreed** that the activities helped them understand the four draft approaches.
- **42 agreed or strongly agreed** that they had enjoyed taking part.



Deliberative Dialogue

At the end of each session participants were provided with a short poll. 38 participants answered the questions in the first workshop. Of those:

- **35 agreed or strongly agreed** that the materials were useful.
- **36 agreed or strongly agreed** that they felt comfortable contributing to the discussion.
- **37 agreed or strongly agreed** that they had enjoyed taking part.

89 participants answered the questions in the second workshop. Of those:

- **76 agreed or strongly agreed** that they found the presentations easy to understand.
- **84 agreed or strongly agreed** that they now have a greater understanding of EirGrid's work.

86 participants answered the questions in the third workshop. Of those:

- **83 agreed or strongly agreed** that the activities helped them to understand the four draft approaches proposed.
- **83 agreed or strongly agreed** that they understood how their feedback will be used by EirGrid.



Appendix D: Opportunity statements

1. We want EirGrid to prioritise long-term planning that ensures the best decisions are made for communities and citizens. We prioritise 1 and 3 with a small bit of 4 (for higher employment businesses). In all cases prioritising people and environmental above all other interests, including community benefit and environmental impact as additional key criteria. Benefits and costs (environmental etc.) and distributed equitably, investment is future-proofed, considers a range of production methods (i.e. hydro) and potential for generating income for citizens is explored (i.e. hydrogen production), ensuring change is within budget and reaches 2050 targets.
2. We want EirGrid to prioritise meeting targets in a costly and efficient manner and consideration taken to the public and the landscape. The implications of not meeting the targets is not passed on to the consumer, that the public are informed and involved in the decision-making process, communities benefit from the CBF scheme and the landscape is not adversely affected.
3. We want EirGrid to prioritise an approach that provides value to the consumer while engaging with communities using modern and efficient solutions that have the least negative impact on the environment and on our citizens – both now and in the future – in a way that is transparent and accountable so that as a country we are maximising our natural resources to become world leaders.
4. We want EirGrid to prioritise achieving 70% clean energy by 2030 but in a cost-effective and ecologically sound manner, that is inclusive of all stakeholders and methods of contribution from both large and small developers and communities, so that the national grid is future-proofed and sustainable, cleaner and greener, heading towards Net Zero 2070, while ensuring balanced national development, with research and investment in existing and new technologies.
5. We want EirGrid to prioritise keeping costs to end user affordable and ensuring positive contributions to local community (i.e. roads, community development), ensuring ongoing public ownership of the grid, and communicating what is happening using plain language through an awareness campaign So that you get informed buy-in from the public, we can be recognised as a leader and be able to be proud of our contribution to climate change, and we see the benefits of it locally not just globally.
6. We want EirGrid to prioritise a solution which impacts communities fairly and evenly (where any disadvantages as well as opportunities are spread out) in a cost-effective way which is efficiently executed and achievable, while including the community in decision making so that electricity distribution is reliable, affordable comes from a variety



of renewable sources which protect human and environmental health, while achieving the 70% renewables target. (nuclear option not an option in Ireland!)

7. We want EirGrid to prioritise an affordable solution building on our infrastructure and expertise, and to develop innovative technology So that EirGrid develops achievable solutions and develops sustainable methods of generating renewable energy in order to ensure Ireland's approach has the least impact on both the environment and local communities.
8. We want EirGrid to prioritise a sustainable, strategically planned, cost effective and environmentally sound energy grid for the whole country to meet at minimum 70% clean electricity by 2030 so that infrastructure and incentives (employment opportunities, accommodation, tax breaks, cultural/social opportunities) are put in place to facilitate the demand led option in communities around the country to meet the needs of all users.
9. We want EirGrid to prioritise minimising costs, balance impacts on consumers and companies, minimise impacts of infrastructure on communities, including visual aspects, minimise projects numbers to decrease planning objections and delays, so that we can minimise living costs, ensure energy security nationwide, minimise outages, and deliver targets by 2030.
10. We want EirGrid to prioritise cost-effective sustainable energy, equal distribution and community benefit to the whole of Ireland, communication/education, cross-departmental collaboration so that green energy is available to all citizens and future generations of Ireland, self-generation of electricity is possible, accessible, and affordable so Ireland can grow together.
11. We want EirGrid to prioritise meeting the 2030 goal, resilience of the electricity supply, consideration of social and environmental impact, individual and household costs, consideration of current providers and employees, decentralisation and diversification of industry so that citizens buy in to the change in system, the best solution for minimal disruption to communities and existing services, meet future demands, and protect employment.
12. We want EirGrid to prioritise the delivery of clean energy generation with clear communications and transparency in every aspect of the process. Ongoing accountability and future-proofing is critical so that we have an equitable, sustainable first-class system nationwide that doesn't adversely impact on community and environment, and provides value for money.



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