



www.eirgrid.com

The Oval, 160 Shelbourne Road
Ballsbridge, Dublin D04 FW28, Ireland

Telephone +353 1 677 1700

Email info@eirgrid.com

11 January 2021

Re: Submission on Longford County Council Draft Development Plan 2021 – 2027

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your correspondence in relation to the *Longford Draft County Development Plan 2021-2027*. EirGrid welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Draft plan and requests this submission is taken into consideration in the finalisation of the plan.

1.0 EirGrid's Function

EirGrid is responsible for the safe, secure and reliable transmission of electricity – now and in the future. EirGrid develops, manages and operates the electricity transmission grid that brings power from where it is generated to where it is needed throughout Ireland. The grid also supplies power to industry and businesses that use large amounts of electricity and powers the distribution network. The distribution network in turn supplies electricity to homes, businesses, schools, hospitals, and farms.

We implement government policy in Ireland, and in Northern Ireland. We act independently and in the public interest and are regulated as monopoly service providers. We perform our services for the benefit of every electricity user on the island of Ireland, and to support the economy in both jurisdictions.

EirGrid's function as the national electricity Transmission System Operator (TSO) is set out in the *European Communities (Internal Market in Energy) Regulations, 2000 - SI 445/2000*. Article 8(1)(a) gives EirGrid as TSO, the exclusive statutory function:

“To operate and ensure the maintenance of and, if necessary, develop a safe, secure, reliable, economical, and efficient electricity transmission system, and to explore and develop opportunities for interconnection of its system with other systems, in all cases with a view to ensuring that all reasonable demands for electricity are met having due regard for the environment.”

The transmission system on the island of Ireland refers to the higher capacity electricity network and primarily comprises substations and circuits at 400 kV (i.e. 400,000 Volts), 220 kV, and 110 kV (in Northern Ireland, transmission infrastructure also occurs at 275 kV). EirGrid's (2020) *Transmission System Map* (ENCL1) is enclosed.

2.0 Policy-Led Strategy

EirGrid made a submission in March 2020 at the Pre-Draft Development Plan Review stage. Since that submission was made, EirGrid has revised its strategy, named *Strategy 2020 – 25: Transforming the Power System for Future Generations* (ENCL2). The Strategy is based on four main goals:

- Lead the island's electricity sector on sustainability and decarbonisation
- Operate, develop and enhance the all-island grid and market;
- Work with partners for positive change:
- Engage for better outcomes for all.

Our new Strategy is shaped by two factors – climate change and the impending transformation of the electricity sector. The Irish Government and EU response is to plan for the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon future. This is reflected in the Irish Government's 2019 Climate Action Plan, and in the UK Government plan to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The transition to low-carbon and renewable energy will have widespread consequences. There will be major changes in how electricity is generated, and in how it is bought and sold. There will also be major changes in how electricity is used, such as for transport and heat. The electricity system will carry more power than ever before and most of that power will be from renewable sources. Coal, peat and oil-based generation will be phased out in the next decade.

3.0 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The RSES recognises that with the projected increase in population and economic growth to 2040 the demand for energy is set to increase in the coming years. To meet increased energy demands, the need to better leverage natural resources to increase the share of renewable energy is recognised.

The RSES states that diversification of energy production systems away from fossil fuels and towards green energy such as wind, wave, solar and biomass, together with smart energy systems and the

conversion of the built environment into both a generator and consumer of energy and the electrification of transport fleets will require the progressive and strategic development of a different form of energy grid (p. 224).

EirGrid supports the Just Transition Fund objectives in the Midlands that are set out in the Draft Development Plan to re-purpose former peat powered electricity stations and facilitate new economic development in the county based on renewable power generation.

2.3 EirGrid Projects in County Longford

The existing Midlands transmission network is comprised of 400 kV, 220 kV and 110 kV infrastructures. In Co. Longford specifically there is significant transmission infrastructure in the county given its central location on the island. The regional demand centres (i.e. Longford) and generation sources (e.g. Lanesboro) are mainly served by the dispersed 110 kV meshed network.

EirGrid's *Transmission Development Plan 2020 – 2029* sets out current and planned projects in County Longford. These are as follows:

- Flagford – Louth 220 kV Line Refurbishment Project – 110 km route refurbishment with estimated completion date of 2021
- Cloon – Lanesboro 110 kV Line Refurbishment Project – 65 km route refurbishment with an estimated completion date of 2021
- Lanesboro 110 kV Station Redevelopment – this project has been granted planning permission and is due for completion in 2024
- Richmond 110 kV Station Power Flow Control Scheme – this project is to uprate the existing facility with an estimated completion date of 2023. A planning application has not yet been lodged with the Council.

2.4 Longford Draft County Development Plan 2021 - 2027

Policy objectives for Electricity / Gas are set out in Chapter 5 of the Draft Development Plan.

EirGrid welcomes the inclusion of Regional Policy Objectives for energy provision in the Draft Development Plan 2021 – 2027. In paragraph 5.7.1 – *Electricity Network* - the Council offers its continued support for the infrastructural renewal and development of electricity in the County by EirGrid. County Policy Objective CPO 5.119 to CPO 5.123 deal with Energy Networks Infrastructure and reflect the Regional Policy Objectives in the RSES.

Policy Objective CPO 5.123 requires that energy services are placed underground where appropriate. This policy objective could act as an impediment to achievement of EirGrid's objectives for the County. It is not always technically feasible to provide electricity cables underground for all or part of the route, each case being unique to its location. Therefore EirGrid requests that CPO 5.123 is amended in the Draft Development Plan to exclude transmission grid infrastructure.

EirGrid carefully plans its options and sites for new transmission grid infrastructure based on a careful consideration of a wide range of issues. The final option for any line is a carefully considered balance of technical, environmental and landowner considerations. Where it is not possible to avoid using overhead lines EirGrid will always document the reasons why.

EirGrid suggests that the following Regional Policy Objective from the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region is inserted into the Draft Development Plan:

RPO 10.22: *Support the reinforcement and strengthening of the electricity transmission and distribution network to facilitate planned growth and transmission/ distribution of renewable energy focused generation across the major demand centres.*

EirGrid would welcome the opportunity to meet with Longford County Council Development Plan team to discuss revision to the Policy Objectives for Electricity and ensure they are sufficiently robust to develop the electricity grid in a safe and secure way.

4.0 Conclusion

The development of the transmission grid as summarised above and outlined in detail in EirGrid's *Strategy 2020 – 2025* is of critical importance to support the economy and society, as well as to realise the transformation of Ireland's energy system to meet climate change and energy obligations. Electricity infrastructure is critical for regional economic and spatial development.

To ensure Ireland's sustainable development and growth, EirGrid requires appropriate and robust policies and objectives for planning the national grid infrastructure and prioritising it appropriately in order to deliver national, regional and local benefit. In this regard, EirGrid requests that the importance of the grid is acknowledged as a strategic issue in the Development Plan Core Strategy and in policy objectives relevant to the electricity grid.



EirGrid is available to collaborate with the authority and to provide expert and focused input into the preparation of the plan, particularly from a strategic energy policy perspective. Should you have any comments in regard of this submission please contact the undersigned. EirGrid once more welcomes the opportunity to participate in the making of the plan and looks forward to further engagement.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa English", written in a cursive style.

Lisa English,
Senior Planner.

ENCL1 – EirGrid Transmission System Map 2020

<http://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/EirGrid-Group-Transmission-Map-January-2020.pdf>

ENCL2 – EirGrid Strategy 2020 – 25: Transforming the power system for future generations

<http://www.eirgridgroup.com/about/strategy-2025/EirGrid-Group-Strategy-2025-DOWNLOAD.pdf>