

# Consultation on the Material Alterations to the Draft Longford County Development Plan

## Gas Networks Ireland Response

10th August 2021

Online Submission



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# Introduction

Gas Networks Ireland welcomes the opportunity to respond Longford County Council's consultation on the Material Alterations to the Draft Longford County Development Plan.

Gas Networks Ireland is a wholly owned subsidiary of Ervia and was established in accordance with the Gas Regulation Act 2013, as amended. It owns and operates the natural gas transmission and distribution networks in Ireland. Gas Networks Ireland builds, develops and operates Ireland's world-class gas infrastructure, maintaining over 14,500 km of gas pipelines and two sub-sea interconnectors. The gas network can be considered a critical entity as it transports gas through the network on behalf of over 700,000 customers made up of the following sectors, Power Generation, Industrial and Commercial, Residential and Transport.

## Consultation Response

Gas Networks Ireland would like to understand the rationale behind the amendment to Policy Objective CPO5.151 in the Material Alterations to the Draft Longford County Development Plan Volume I Written Statement document. The policy objective is to *"facilitate the development of projects that convert biomass to energy, subject to proper planning considerations"*. However, an amendment has been made which states that *"such projects where it can be demonstrated that the feedstock source is sustainable and where the end product will not be mixed with fossil gas"*.

It is essential that Ireland decarbonises the gas flowing through the gas network. This decarbonisation will happen over time and having gradually increasing levels of blended renewable gas and natural gas will be critical to achieving this target. It is vital that biomethane can enter the gas network as a direct replacement for natural gas. In addition, it is envisaged that blends of hydrogen in the gas network will help reduce emissions until it is possible to have 100% hydrogen gas networks. In March 2021, the Government published the Interim Climate Actions 2021. This document includes an overarching action to decarbonise the gas network (Action 54). This Action is made up of a number of different parts including actions related to developing biomethane grid injection infrastructure and testing the feasibility of technically and safely injecting green hydrogen blends into the gas grid as a means of decarbonising the gas network. Renewable gas/biomethane was first introduced into the Irish gas network through an injection point in County Kildare, supplied by Green Generation, in August 2019. A deal between Tesco Ireland and Green Generation has seen Tesco supplying 6,400 tonnes of food waste per annum to Green Generation for conversion to renewable gas<sup>1</sup>. This renewable gas/biomethane is injected into the gas network at the Kildare injection point and then Tesco purchases this renewable gas to supply energy needs at six of its stores. This results in carbon savings of 1,200 tonnes per year for Tesco and supports the circular economy.

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<sup>1</sup> Irish Times – Tesco to cut emissions by converting waste food from Irish stores to gas:  
<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/energy-and-resources/tesco-to-cut-emissions-by-converting-waste-food-from-irish-stores-to-gas-1.4271907>

The gas network has historically demonstrated resilience and reliability through high energy demand days which can be due to a combination of factors such as weather events to low wind days etc. While these high demand days are typically over a winter season, they also occur over summer days depending on the level of wind supporting renewable generation and the electricity network. Record high energy demand was experienced in January and December 2010 when the highest sub-zero temperatures were recorded. During late 2017 and early 2018, the gas network demonstrated its resilience through extreme weather events, i.e. storm Emma and Ophelia, with no interruption of gas supply to households, businesses or the power generation sector. Gas Networks Ireland will continue to ensure that a resilient, robust and safe gas network is maintained for customers through appropriate and efficient investment. This is very important as the gas network plays a significant role in the Irish economy by delivering gas to power stations and industrial and commercial customers. The Irish gas network, on average, generates over half of Ireland's electricity annually and is capable of meeting gas demand in all weather conditions. The gas network also provides essential back up for intermittent renewables, such as wind and solar, to operate securely. While the average reliance for power generation is circa 50%, this can be over 90% at times, depending on the prevailing conditions (i.e. wind levels) for renewable generation. As mentioned previously, time and time again, the gas network has demonstrated resilience during the harshest weather events, ensuring security of gas supply and safety is maintained.

## **Conclusion**

Gas Networks Ireland would welcome the opportunity to discuss this response in more detail with the County Council.